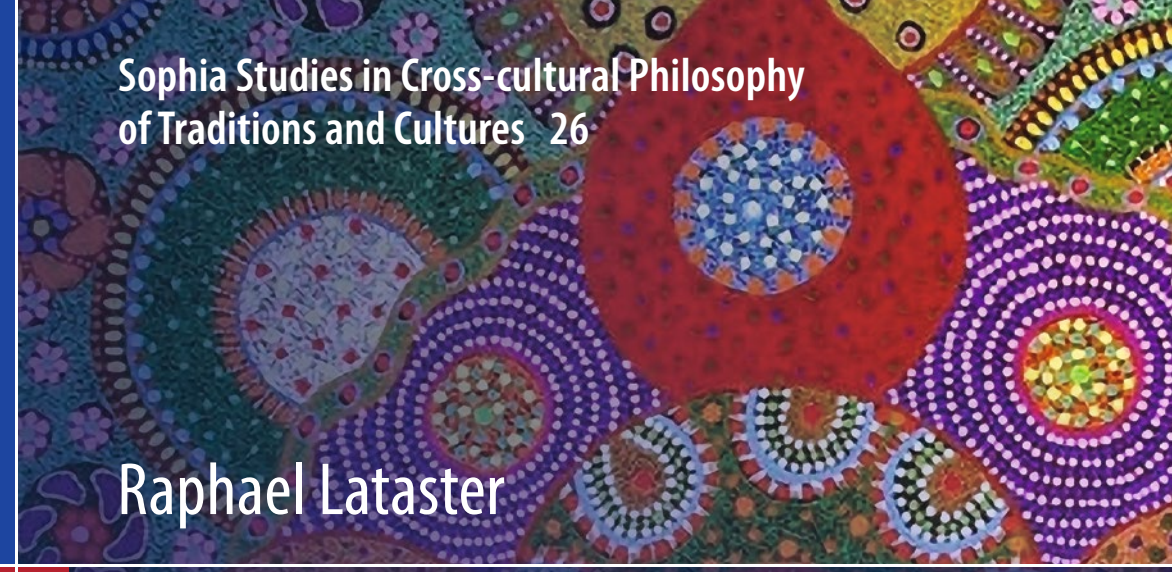

Raphael Lataster

The Case Against Theism

Why the Evidence Disproves God's Existence

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I also extend gratitude to the primary subject of this project (besides the Lord): William Lane Craig. I must give him some credit for the path that I am now on; Craig inadvertently played an important role in my deconversion. Made aware of his apologetic efforts and relative sophistication, I sought out his body of work in an attempt to salvage my increasingly failing faith. What I perceived at the time as being the 'best' case for Christian theism was not sufficient. This would later inspire me in part to undertake this current work. Furthermore, our discussions on my project and clarification of his views have been pleasant. As a former Christian evidentialist and fundamentalist, and as someone who now embraces postmodernism while simultaneously disdaining it, I also respect Craig's attempts to justify his exclusivist, or particularist, views. Part of me even wishes that he will eventually succeed.

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Contents

1 Introduction and Methods 1
- 1.1 Aims 6
- 1.2 *Reasonable Faith* and Other Sources 8
- 1.3 The Philosophical Approach 9
- 1.4 The Historical Approach 14
- 1.5 Bayesian Reasoning 15
- 1.6 Biblical Scholarship and the Criteria for Authenticity 19
- 1.7 The Sociological Approach 24

2 The Case for Theism 25
- 2.1 Craig's Cumulative Case Strategy and God/Theism Defined 25
- 2.2 The Contingency Argument 28
  - 2.2.1 Premise 1 – The Necessity of Explaining Craig's 'Explanation' 28
  - 2.2.2 Premise 2 – The Explanation/Cause of the Universe 33
  - 2.2.3 Premise 2 – The Contingency of the Universe 36
  - 2.2.4 Premise 2 – The Necessity of God, and What That Entails 40
  - 2.2.5 Bayesian Analysis 43
  - 2.2.6 Conclusion 44
- 2.3 The Kalām Cosmological Argument 45
  - 2.3.1 Premise 1 – Beginnings and Causes 47
  - 2.3.2 Premise 2 – The Philosophical Case for the Universe's Beginning 53
  - 2.3.3 Premise 2 – The Scientific Case for the Universe's Beginning 64
  - 2.3.4 The Cause of the Universe 74
  - 2.3.5 Bayesian Analysis 78
  - 2.3.6 Conclusion 82

2.4 The Teleological Argument . . . 83
2.4.1 Premise 1 – Three Explanantia . . . 87
2.4.2 Premise 2 – Necessity . . . 89
2.4.3 Premise 2 – Chance . . . 91
2.4.4 Premise 2 – Intelligent Design . . . 96
2.4.5 Bayesian Analysis . . . 99
2.4.6 Conclusion . . . 107
2.5 The Axiological Argument . . . 107
2.5.1 Premise 1 – Semantics . . . 108
2.5.2 Premise 2 – It Is Known . . . 113
2.5.3 The Euthyphro Dilemma . . . 118
2.5.4 Bayesian Analysis . . . 120
2.5.5 Conclusion . . . 122
2.6 The Ontological Argument . . . 122
2.6.1 Premise 1 – The Possibility of God's Possible Existence . . . 124
2.6.2 Bayesian Analysis . . . 128
2.6.3 Conclusion . . . 129
2.7 The Experiential Argument . . . 129
2.7.1 Properly Basic Belief . . . 130
2.7.2 Experience . . . 132
2.7.3 Wishful Thinking . . . 137
2.7.4 Bayesian Analysis . . . 140
2.7.5 Conclusion . . . 141
2.8 Concluding Remarks . . . 142

3 The Case for A-Theism . . . 145
3.1 The Many Failings of Craig's Case for Theism . . . 145
3.2 The Problem of Naturalisms . . . 150
3.2.1 The Argument from Hiddenness . . . 153
3.2.2 The Argument from Inconsistent Revelations . . . 159
3.2.3 The Argument from Evil . . . 160
3.2.4 Many More Problems for Theism . . . 162
3.3 The Problem of Polytheisms . . . 164
3.4 The Problem of Alternative Monotheisms . . . 169
3.5 The Problem of Pantheisms . . . 172
3.5.1 Craig's Case against Pantheism . . . 180
3.5.2 A Mereological-Ontological Argument for Existence Monism . . . 184
3.5.3 Case Study: Pandeism vs. Theism . . . 192
3.6 The Problem of (Special) Revelation . . . 199
3.6.1 The Problem of Alternative Judeo-Christian Gods . . . 206
3.7 Concluding Remarks . . . 213

4 The Case for Christian Theism 217
4.1 The Facts 219
4.1.1 The Sources and Jesus Agnosticism 223
4.1.2 Jesus Mythicism 230
4.2 The Miraculous Hypothesis 234
4.3 The "So What?" Factor 252
4.3.1 Alternative Christological Arguments 257
4.4 Concluding Remarks 260

5 Craig in the Sociological Context 263
5.1 Christian Evidentialism 264
5.2 Why Evidence? 267
5.3 The Celebrity of Craig 271
5.4 Conclusions 288

Conclusions 291

Bibliography 299

Chapter 1
Introduction and Methods

This book largely focuses on the evidentialist case for the god of classical theism presented by William Lane Craig, and argues that many alternatives to theism, both naturalistic and supernaturalistic, are more probable.

William Lane Craig (b. 1949) is a Christian apologist and well-published philosopher of religion. Loved by popular audiences, and reviled by some of his academic peers,[1] Craig presents a cumulative case for the existence of the Christian god.[2] Not only does Craig attempt to do this from within the academy, as a professional scholar, but he also writes on the topic for general audiences, and engages in many debates with educated and sometimes high profile atheists.[3] The idea that God's existence can – or needs to – be proven, while generally unproblematic in the public sphere, often faces serious opposition from scholars. God, after all, may be too grand and mysterious to be reducible to a 'mere hypothesis' and the vulgarity that is empirical observation. Craig, much like Richard Swinburne – the putative doyen of the field[4] – before him, shuns these concerns, explaining why an evidentialist case for Christianity is so important:

> Indeed, I think that getting people to believe that we live in a postmodern culture is one of the craftiest deceptions that Satan has yet devised. . . And so Satan deceives us into voluntarily laying aside our best weapons of logic and evidence, thereby ensuring unawares modernism's triumph

[1] A respected Australian philosopher once said to me that Craig's case "is bullshit, but it's sophisticated bullshit".

[2] William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008).

[3] I take 'atheism' to mean, as it does etymologically, 'not theism', so that an 'atheist' is simply 'not a theist'. Atheists need not be certain of anything, possibly being agnostic on all matters, and need not even exalt science.

[4] At least where Christian evidentialism is concerned. Alvin Plantinga is also very prominent and academically distinguished.

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> over us. If we adopt this suicidal course of action, the consequences for the church in the next generation will be catastrophic... We've got to train our kids for war.[5]

Craig placates more conventional believers by claiming that, like them, he *knows* Christianity to be true, but acknowledges the important role of reason and evidence in *demonstrating* Christianity to be true.[6] Noted philosopher of religion Richard Swinburne agrees that the evidence for Christianity is important, adding that, "If theology uses too many words in analogical senses it will convey virtually nothing by what it says".[7] That analytic philosophers in the present are arguing for a reasonable case to believe in God, is a relatively recent phenomenon, as noted by *Time* magazine:

> In a quiet revolution in thought and argument that hardly anybody could have foreseen only two decades ago, God is making a comeback. Most intriguingly, this is happening not among theologians or ordinary believers, but in the crisp intellectual circles of academic philosophers, where the consensus had long banished the Almighty from fruitful discourse.[8]

More recently, Quentin Smith lamented the seemingly increasing desecularisation of the academy, as well as the influence of Christianity:

> Naturalists passively watched as realist versions of theism, most influenced by [Alvin] Plantinga's writings, began to sweep through the philosophical community, until today perhaps one-quarter or one-third of philosophy professors are theists, with most being orthodox Christians... Theists in other fields tend to compartmentalize their theistic beliefs from their scholarly work; they rarely assume and never argue for theism in their scholarly work. If they did, they would be committing academic suicide or, more exactly, their articles would quickly be rejected... But in philosophy, it became, almost overnight, "academically respectable" to argue for theism, making philosophy a favored field of entry for the most intelligent and talented theists entering academia today.[9]

Alvin Plantinga's role in the emergence of these 'New Theologians' has been fundamental.[10] In 1978, Plantinga co-founded the Society of Christian Philosophers,

---

[5]Craig (RF), pp. 18–19.

[6]Craig claims to know that Christianity is true, due to the "self-authenticating witness of God's Holy Spirit", and recognises the importance of probabilistic arguments in showing Christianity to be true. See ibid., pp. 43–60.

[7]Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 72. On one hand the desire for evidence is understandable, while on the other the risk is that the available evidence disconfirms theism. For example, the steady-state cosmological theory seemed to disconfirm theism for many decades, before it fell out of vogue.

[8]"Modernizing the Case for God," *Time* April 7, 1980, pp. 65–66.

[9]Quentin Smith, "The Metaphilosophy of Naturalism," *Philo* 4, no. 2 (2001): 197–198. While the "almost overnight" comment can be doubted, it is an interesting article. Also, Graham Oppy finds it most implausible that, "today perhaps one-quarter or one-third of philosophy professors are theists" (personal communication, July 25, 2016).

[10]A term I have previously used for the new breed of educated and philosophically sophisticated religious apologists. See Raphael Lataster, "New Theologians, New Atheists, and Public Engagement," *Alternative Spirituality and Religion Review* 4, no. 1 (2013): 70–91. 'New Apologists' and 'New Theists' also work. For the latter term, cf. Nathan Schneider. "The New Theist: How William Lane Craig became Christian philosophy's boldest apostle," accessed 12/01/2017, http://www.chronicle.com/article/The-New-Theist/140019.

the sole aim of which is to "promote fellowship among Christian Philosophers and to stimulate study and discussion of issues which arise from their Christian and philosophical commitments."[11] The Society openly proclaims its view that its philosophical expertise is merely a tool for the promotion of Christianity, stating that one of the group's "chief aims is to go beyond the usual philosophy of religion sessions at the American Philosophical Association and to stimulate thinking about the nature and role of Christian commitment in philosophy."[12] Plantinga has admitted that "philosophers who happen, incidentally, to be Christians" have their own agenda and must avoid philosophical ideas that are "deeply anti-Christian", revealing that such philosophers may be presuppositionalist,[13] and issued a rallying call that his colleagues should "strive to be Christian philosophers."[14]

While fellow theologians and even critical scholars from the discipline of Studies in Religion may shun much of the work done in the analytic Philosophy of Religion, favouring more subjective and equivocal conceptions of God (such as 'God is love', 'God is the ultimate concern', or 'God is the search for God'), the likes of Craig and Swinburne provide an admirable standpoint in attempting to justify their religious exclusivism and postulating a personal god as a testable hypothesis.[15] Indeed, it is only when this is done, that God could seriously be used as an explanatory hypothesis. In *God in the Age of Science?*, which critiques Swinburne's case for theism, philosopher Herman Philipse condemns ambiguous notions of God, speculating that "these methods seem to have zero reliability in the pursuit of truth, if we can make sense of them at all in spite of their elusive vagueness".[16] This project will not focus on crypto-theistic views of God postulated by some Continental philosophers, who surprisingly – analytic philosophers might say 'frustratingly' – employ the same religious language used by more mainstream believers. While not all religious traditions and adherents rely on factual claims, many do, and so it should hopefully be obvious that especially those that wish to claim the *exclusive* truth of their religious views should be expected to justify them with evidence, particularly when this exclusivism is combined with evangelism, and particularly when their intended targets have religious beliefs of their own.

Declaring this book to being solely focussed on Craig's case may be perceived as being overly cautious and rendering the project less significant. Not to apologise, however, in a fashion, this work not only serves to critique Craig's case, but also to

[11]SCP. "Welcome to the SCP Website!," accessed 05/05/2013, http://www.societyofchristianphilosophers.com.

[12]Ibid.

[13]In that they presuppose the truth of Christian theism.

[14]Alvin Plantinga, "Advice to Christian Philosophers," *Faith and Philosophy* 1, no. 3 (1984), pp. 270–271.

[15]Christianity is generally a global and proselytising faith. By 'exclusivism', I mean the attitude that this faith is exclusively 'true'. Many forms of Judaism could be considered exclusivist in both senses of the term.

[16]Herman Philipse, *God in the Age of Science?: A Critique of Religious Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 85.

stress the importance of such a case to those believers who do see their religious doctrines as claims to truth (eliminating those who view religion in a non-cognitive manner, such as many Pagans and Continental philosophers) and who also believe that these factual claims ought to be supported by reasons and evidence (eliminating presuppositionalists and reformed epistemologists with a lesser focus on evidentialism, such as Alvin Plantinga).[17] As recognised by Philipse, such believers will then have to decide whether the methods used to validate their religious beliefs should be like or unlike the methods "employed by scientists or historians".[18] The latter case would be difficult to justify and would lack credibility, resulting in wholly unconvincing arguments to those nonbelievers who value very highly the typically objective and useful methods of scientists and historians. Such believers would face constant objections, such as why it is that their religious beliefs are exempt from such commonly used and practical methods, while instead being subject to methods that are ill-defined and highly dubious.[19] Put succinctly, believers who view their religious beliefs as truth claims that should be justified ought to do so by employing commonly accepted scientific methods. This project will try and ascertain if there are significant numbers of believers who agree with this proposition and who attempt to abide by it.

If believers ought to, or indeed do, rely on evidential claims, the importance of analysing the argumentative cases such as Craig's needs no more justification. Nevertheless, a retreat is permissible; whether this view is correct or not is beside the point, as it is the approach taken by the likes of Craig, Swinburne, and their allies, which is of interest to this research. This leads to the primacy of the scientific methods of analytic philosophy. It is the analytic arguments of such prominent philosophers of religion that provide the main focus for this monograph. Many issues concerning Continental philosophy and postmodernism will be overlooked, due to Craig's preference for analytic methods, and the interest in discussing God as a testable and explanatory hypothesis, which is virtually impossible or at least futile with certain ambiguous and subjective approaches. While such subjective concepts of God are appreciated and useful in an idiosyncratic sense, it is the Craigian God, which supposedly exists in an objective and absolute sense, and allegedly created the world, who is under investigation in this project; so it will inevitably be scientific methods that are here employed.

[17]Craig and Plantinga are actually similar in many ways. It is undoubtedly true, however, that Craig focuses more on the evidence and arguments for God's existence. Plantinga, while a Christian and a competent philosopher of the analytic tradition, actually downplays the importance of natural theology, preferring more of a presuppositionalist approach. He is well known for his reformed *objection* to natural theology; his arguments will be touched on throughout this book.

[18]Philipse (GAS), p. 339.

[19]Furthermore, if the believer is going to appeal to the sort of 'evidence' that objective scientists and historians would not consider to be evidence, they may as well retreat a step, become presuppositionalists, and declare that evidence is unnecessary. Note also the dilemma here that those believers who do employ scientifically credible methods open their religious beliefs up to disconfirmation.

Since a number of reasons for assessing analytic philosophical arguments for God's existence have been provided, it is time to explain why Craig, from all the articulate and prominent philosophers of religion in the academy, should be the focus of this project. Philipse, for example, argues that it is Swinburne, and not Craig, whose "cumulative case strategy yields the best pleading in support of theism available in the literature".[20] Indeed, that Philipse has so recently put forth his comprehensive refutation of Swinburne's case, partly explains this seemingly curious choice. Another critique of the work of Swinburne hardly seems necessary at this time. While it may be of no surprise to philosophers who are dismissive of Craig's efforts, William Lane Craig's case lacks such a comprehensive critique. Despite Craig's presentation of a serious evidentialist case for Christian theism, the perception that Craig is more of a populariser may have contributed to this. This project intends to rectify this issue, and pay Craig and his arguments the professional attention they merit.

Craig's own cumulative case for his theistic view of the world is, at first glance, an attractive one. The arguments are simple to grasp, and the case effectively differentiates between arguments for a 'generic' god and arguments (or rather 'argument') for his 'specific' god.[21] Craig attempts to use the arguments of natural theology, such as cosmological and teleological arguments, to demonstrate the existence of a theistic god. Moving on to revealed theology, he then invokes "Christian evidences" in order to "show why a specifically Christian theism is true".[22] Note also that in the public sphere, the manner in which Craig delivers his message is duly altered. This convenient structure translates well to the structure of this project.

In the first and second parts of this book, Craig's arguments for the 'generic' god of theism shall be analysed, and challenges to his case discovered, primarily through philosophical methods. The far more relevant evidence for Craig's 'specific' god shall then be considered and scrutinised in the third part. As much of the evidence tends to rely on the New Testament, the methods employed here are largely those of historians and biblical scholars. That the arguments for the 'generic' god are deemed to be of lesser importance justifies a derivative, relatively superficial, and even a possibly unsophisticated – compared with thorough and highly technical philosophical research – overview approach. Interestingly, the possibility will be considered that a probabilistic method of reasoning, typically Bayesian, may underlie both how the philosophical and historical arguments are examined.

Furthermore, Craig's interactions with the public, and his publishing for general – as well as academic – audiences provides interesting opportunities with regards to

[20]Philipse (GAS), p. 337.

[21]Throughout this project, 'generic god' often refers to the god whose existence is supposedly proven via natural theology. For example, the god of bare theism. The term 'specific god' often refers to a particular, i.e., religious, view of this supposedly existing god, typically formed by considerations and claims of revelation. For example, the 'Christian god' or the 'Muslim god' of ramified theisms.

[22]Craig (RF), p. 24.

investigating sociological issues concerning such popular New Theologians. Considerations of these issues will form the basis of the fifth part of this study. Craig is not merely a scholar that may influence like-minded peers; he is also a popular figure that brings his message to the public.[23] How Craig interacts with both the public and his vocal opponents, and how he is perceived, allows for insightful sociological research. Of particular interest will be observations of how it is that Craig appears to 'win' in his debates. Whether popular atheistic authors and speakers are suitably qualified to engage with the modern and sophisticated theologians, in the 'intellectual battles for God' shall also be briefly considered. The popular New Atheists tend to be experts in fields other than Philosophy of Religion or Biblical Studies, such as journalism or biology, while those more suitably qualified, by will or by happenstance, seem to be relatively unknown to the public.

This project is concerned with the case for theism, particularly the case for Christian theism presented by William Lane Craig; it is not necessarily a general critique of religion, or of Christianity, or of theism. Nevertheless, positive arguments against theism shall also be considered. Furthermore, as Craig's case largely relies on inductive arguments, it is wholly possible that the state of the evidence may transform Craig's arguments for theism into effective arguments against theism.[24]

1.1 Aims

The primary aim of this research project is to produce a generalised critique of William Lane Craig's cumulative case of arguments for the existence of a specifically Christian God; a critique which incorporates philosophical, mathematical, scientific, historical, and sociological approaches.[25] Recently, Herman Philipse produced a thorough – and devastating – critique of Richard Swinburne's case for Christian theism, and it is hoped that this project will yield something similar, with regards to Craig's case. As earlier explained, the focus of the critique will be on arguments for the 'specific' god, so that the critiques of these arguments will be dealt with in a far more comprehensive manner than those that posit a mere 'generic' god. It is not within the scope of this project to criticise religion in general, or Christianity;

[23] An incomplete list of Craig's public debates alone makes for impressive reading. See William Lane Craig. "Debates," accessed 18/11/2013, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/media/debates.

[24] Almost all of the arguments are inductive, *a posteriori*, arguments that appeal to evidence. As such, the evidence could disconfirm Craig's theistic hypothesis. Even his supposedly deductive, purely conceptual, *a priori* argument, the ontological argument, can be judged probabilistically by deferring to alternative god-conceptions to theism.

[25] Kevin Schilbrack graciously supports "mash-ups between philosophy of religion and other disciplines in the academic study of religions". See Kevin Schilbrack, "The Weird Place of God Debates in the Academic Study of Religion," *The Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 14, no. 2 (2015): 424. The article also notes the focus of philosophers like Craig on theism and Christian theism, which is something this book seeks to address.

specifically, it is the modern and relatively sophisticated evidential case for Christian theism that is of interest. This project seeks not to argue that Christianity or any other faith or religion is undesirable, but only to critically examine evidentialist claims posited by Christianity's learned apologists. In fact, it is also a major secondary aim of this project to consider alternative god-conceptions, such as polytheism and pantheism. Taking on the role of a gadfly, this work aims to highlight that Christian theism is often granted special privileges by theistic philosophers of religion (and the academy in general), which seems doubly inappropriate when certain alternative god-conceptions may even prove to be more plausible. Keeping within the spirit of reconsidering god, the use of masculine pronouns when referring to a supposedly immaterial being shall be non-exclusive.

Appropriately, another secondary aim of this project is to define 'theism', at least in the sense used by William Lane Craig and likeminded apologists. This further reinforces that it is not the overall belief in god or even theism that is being critiqued, but Craig's specific form of theism. In less sophisticated discussions, frustrations can arise due to the ambiguity of the god-concepts under consideration, which also leave open the possibility of 'shifting the goalposts'. As earlier alluded to, a vague or ambiguous concept of theism would be unhelpful, and it is fortunate that Craig does explain reasonably well what he understands theism to be, so that for the purposes of this project, an adequate definition of theism is possible. Indeed, without clarification of what theism actually is, it would be impossible to reasonably propose theism as an explanatory hypothesis that can make predictions; this spells bad news for the supposedly inscrutable God of the so-called sceptical theists. Given that New Theologians such as Craig and Swinburne put forth the hypothesis of theism in attempting to explain the alleged beginning of the universe and the apparent fine-tuning of the universe, an unintelligible theistic concept would necessarily render such inductive natural theology impossible. Another, crucial, secondary aim will be to formulate an argument against miraculous claims, and then to test this argument with claims made about Jesus' supposed resurrection.

Yet another important secondary aim is to determine Craig's sociological methods and impact. This project intends to discover how Craig is perceived among scholarly and among general audiences, with some determination to be made on his influence. This influence shall then be contrasted with the efforts and influence of certain vocal opponents such as the New Atheists. Craig's debate tactics will also be scrutinised, so that if Craig is seen to be influential even among non-believers, some theories as to why this is the case can be formulated. To some extent – especially with regards to his climactic Christological argument – Craig's arguments shall be contrasted with those of other eminent philosophers of religion, such as Richard Swinburne. This serves another purpose; if Craig's arguments are found wanting, perhaps his peers offer superior arguments that could improve Craig's case. In service of this aim, a focus on Craig's more popular work is necessary.

1.2 *Reasonable Faith* and Other Sources

Given this book's emphases on not only Craig's arguments, but also how he conveys them to his audiences, the arguments are mainly sourced from his quasi-scholarly book, *Reasonable Faith*, his popular book, *On Guard*, his website, and his debates. Where appropriate for issues of clarity, and to fairly represent the best and most recent forms of his arguments, his more academic books and articles shall also be referenced. In the second part of this monograph, there will be many references to the work of more critical philosophers, who have analysed similar (or even identical) arguments. These include books written on natural theology by Herman Philipse, Graham Oppy, and Jordan Howard Sobel. Works published by Richard Swinburne shall also prove useful in indentifying where Craig's arguments may be improved. When it comes to comparing various God-conceptions, a range of articles and books on pantheism and other alternatives shall be consulted.[26]

Much of the focus on the fourth part of this book is on historical claims made about Jesus of Nazareth. As such, biblical sources shall be extensively analysed. The main sources[27] in historical Jesus research comprise of the Gospels, the Pauline and other Epistles, and the handful of relatively early extra-biblical extant sources. Unfortunately, due to the scarcity of sources for the Historical Jesus, there is some reliance by Historical Jesus sources on non-extant hypothetical sources. For obvious reasons, little time will be spent in examining hypothetical sources or sources that have not survived to the present day, such as *Q* (a hypothetical source document for the gospels of Matthew and Luke), alleged oral traditions, or the *Gospel of the Hebrews*. It is no doubt preferable that the research be limited to sources that are known to exist and are extant; namely sources that modern scholars have access to. The work of historians that have been influential in the field of historiography shall also be consulted, in order to construct a framework in which to ascertain the reliability of the sources. Sources used in the fifth part will largely consist of Craig's debates, popular articles, and direct empirical observations recorded at public events in which Craig took part, as well as recent research on cognitive science.

The decision to focus the examination of Craig's cumulative case on his book, *Reasonable Faith*, and to a lesser extent, the far more polemical, relatively unsophisticated, and sparsely-referenced *On Guard*, was not made hastily.[28] Craig is widely published in peer-reviewed journals and academic presses, while *Reasonable Faith*, though comprehensive, was written for the benefit of those without many years of rigorous philosophical training. One limiting factor for this important

[26]Such as Michael P. Levine, *Pantheism: A Non-Theistic Concept of Deity* (London: Routledge, 1994).

[27]The term 'primary sources' is here avoided to prevent confusion with how historians usually use the term, and to stress that when it comes to the life of Jesus, no primary sources are extant.

[28]Craig (RF); William Lane Craig, *On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010).

decision is that Craig has only properly explained his cumulative case for God's existence (referred to numerous times in his popular articles and public debates) in a handful of published books; those already mentioned, and *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*.[29] The latter book is five years older than the substantially revised third edition of *Reasonable Faith*, was actually co-authored with James Porter Moreland, and has similarly been described by Craig as being a 'popular level work'.[30] As *Reasonable Faith* is the more recent of the two quasi-scholarly books, Craig has had the opportunity to refine his case; to incorporate any new evidence, particularly advancements in the field of cosmology, and to potentially address reasonable objections he had faced since the publication of the earlier book.

Indeed, it is Craig's focus on relatively simple philosophical explanations that is so crucial to his popular appeal, as shall be argued in the fifth part of this monograph. Furthermore, as Craig's most significant original work in natural theology revolves around the *kalām* cosmological argument, it is appropriate to choose a publication to focus on which includes substantive treatments of other arguments that Craig finds persuasive.

Now as there are three main groupings of evidence to be analysed in this research project, each falling under different branches of the broad discipline of Religious Studies, there are three main categories of methodologies that shall be drawn upon.

1.3 The Philosophical Approach

The essential elements of analytical philosophy are relatively easy to grasp. To many scholars in the relevant fields – even with no expertise in the analytic philosophical tradition – it would seem obvious if an argument employed controversial premises, or committed some form of formal or informal logical fallacy. One helpful way to judge the usefulness of an argument is to determine if the initially controversial conclusion can logically be arrived at through uncontroversial premises; though there are many more important considerations in analysing Craig's arguments than whether they are sound (the argument is logically valid, and the premises are true), or even valid (the conclusion flows logically from the premises). In *Arguing about Gods*, Graham Oppy unambiguously explains what he considers to be a successful argument:

> When should we say that an argument for a given conclusion is a successful argument? I defend the view that, in circumstances in which it is well known that there has been perennial

[29]James Porter Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

[30]William Lane Craig. "Publications," accessed 17/11/2013, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/william-lane-craig/publications.

> controversy about a given claim, a successful argument on behalf of that claim has to be one that ought to persuade all of those who have hitherto failed to accept that claim to change their minds.[31]

That sets a very high standard for argumentation, perhaps unreasonably so. There would always be people that disagree, whether that is due to deception, unintentional ignorance, mental illness, or some other reason. Furthermore, consensus is not necessarily conducive to truth, which is obvious when considering the history of science. Nevertheless, Oppy's notion of a successful argument is broadly accepted by Richard Swinburne, who also describes a number of ways in which an argument could be considered successful:

> Let us call an argument in which the premisses make a conclusion probable a correct P-inductive argument. Let us call an argument in which the premisses add to the probability of the conclusion (that is, make the conclusion more likely, or more probable than it would otherwise be) a correct C-inductive argument. . . The point of arguments is to get people, in so far as they are rational, to accept conclusions. For this purpose it is not sufficient that their premisses should in some sense necessitate or probabilify their conclusion. It is also necessary that the premisses should be known to be true by those who dispute about the conclusion. There are plenty of valid arguments to the existence of God that are quite useless, because, although their premisses may be true, they are not known to be true by those who by those who argue about religion. . .[32]

Swinburne's shunning of purely *a priori* deductive arguments and his description and endorsement of *a posteriori* probabilistic arguments seems reasonable, and allows for – as is appropriate for scientific research – varying levels of certainty. This description also notes that it is not sufficient that a premise be true, but that it is recognised to be true; a point that shall take on greater importance throughout the portions of this book dealing with historical, probabilistic – namely Bayesian – reasoning. Swinburne implies that a correct argument need not necessarily provide absolute certainty of the truth of the conclusion. This is reasonable, as philosophers routinely doubt whether very much at all can be known with absolute certainty, besides *cogito ergo sum*, tautologies, and logical and mathematical axioms;[33] so

[31] Graham Robert Oppy, *Arguing about Gods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 1.

[32] Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 6.

[33] Actually, even the widely-accepted law of non-contradiction can be doubted, as discussed, for example, in Graham Priest, J. C. Beall, and Bradley Armour-Garb, eds., *The Law of Non-Contradiction: New Philosophical Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). The case for dialetheism, the view that some contradictions are true, is also advanced in Graham Priest, *Doubt Truth to Be a Liar* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2006). The classic example is the liar paradox. The statement, "this statement is not true" seems to be 'not true' if 'true' and 'true' if 'not true'. Musings about the possible multiverse could also cause scepticism about such laws and self-evident truths. If one is required, the 'solution' may be to simply accept the unacceptable; to just embrace the absurd and to embrace total agnosticism. Or (and?) we can try to reason from what we think we know, which has worked for us in the past, even if it is not a definite path to absolute truth. In other words, we ought to employ epistemic probabilities.

probabilistic – particularly an epistemic form – reasoning should suffice.[34] A correct argument could simply be one in which the premises make a conclusion likely, greater than 0.5 (P-inductive), or even one in which the premises merely support the conclusion, making the conclusion more likely, although not necessarily greater than 0.5 (C-inductive).

A good argument however, says Swinburne, is one where the premises are true – and known to be true – even by those who initially reject the conclusion. But given that it is William Lane Craig's case that is under scrutiny, and not Swinburne's, it is appropriate that Craig be given the opportunity to define a good argument. In *Reasonable Faith*, Craig does explain the probabilistic nature of his arguments, including some mention of the possible uses of, and recent popularity of, Bayes' Theorem; this includes his effectively acknowledging that the prior probabilities are inscrutable, which is a point we shall revisit often, since it already means that Craig cannot actually argue that theism is probable, and makes it very likely that a critic like myself will demonstrate theism to be improbable.[35] Nevertheless, what Craig considers to be a good argument is best clarified in an essay he prepared for the benefit of university students:

> An argument is a series of statements (called premises) leading to a conclusion. A sound argument must meet two conditions: (1) it is logically valid (i.e., its conclusion follows from the premises by the rules of logic), and (2) its premises are true. If an argument is sound, then the truth of the conclusion follows necessarily from the premises. But to be a good argument, it's not enough that an argument be sound. We also need to have some *reason* to think that the premises are true. A logically valid argument that has, wholly unbeknownst to us, true premises isn't a good argument for the conclusion. The premises have to have some degree of justification or warrant for us in order for a sound argument to be a good one. But how much warrant? The premises surely don't need to be known to be true with certainty (we know almost nothing to be true with certainty!). Perhaps we should say that for an argument to be a good one the premises need to be probably true in light of the evidence. I think that's fair, though sometimes probabilities are difficult to quantify. Another way of putting this is that a good argument is a sound argument in which the premises are more plausible in light of the evidence than their opposites. You should compare the premise and

[34]Schilbrack seemingly supports the idea that we cannot really know 'the truth', and interestingly summarises the development of philosophy as initially concerning the study of things (classical philosophy), then the study of our experiences of things (modern philosophy; the subjective turn), then the realisation that linguistics can shape these experiences (postmodern philosophy; the linguistic turn). In other words, our access to "things in themselves" is impeded by "filters of experience", which are themselves mediated by "filters of language". See Kevin Schilbrack, *Philosophy and the Study of Religions: A Manifesto* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), pp. 156–158. Note that none of this is to say that that there are no objective truths, or that we should not seek them out. In fact, it may be useful to 'pretend' that there are objective truths or that we can get close to them, for our collective sanity, just as it may be helpful to believe that the world is not completely deterministic, if it actually is. Many studies supposedly reveal the benefits of *believing* that we have free will. For example, see Roy F. Baumeister, E. J. Masicampo, and C. Nathan DeWall, "Prosocial Benefits of Feeling Free: Disbelief in Free Will Increases Aggression and Reduces Helpfulness," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 35, no. 2 (2009): 260–268. Of course, we might not actually be free to choose whether we believe in free will or not.

[35]Craig (RF), pp. 52–56.

> its negation and believe whichever one is more plausibly true in light of the evidence. A good argument will be a sound argument whose premises are more plausible than their negations.[36]

Note that Craig's considerations of the truth probabilities of the premises in light of the evidence seems to annul the usefulness of 'arguments' altogether, pointing to the ideal of a purely Bayesian or probabilistic comparison of various theories. Indeed, this is effectively what I attempt, and call for. Despite this important objection, Craig's description of a good argument seems fairly reasonable, apart from the possibly intentional indication that a premise ought to be compared with its 'opposite' or 'negation', as if there were only one alternative.[37] And if Craig expects his opponents to prove his premises false, he is simply wrong. His critics need only not accept the premises, and need not demonstrate the 'negations' as true or more probably true. For example, consider the argument:

(1) If God does not exist, then God does not exist.
(2) God does not exist.
(3) Therefore, God does not exist.

My first premise is obviously true, and the argument is logically valid, so the soundness of the argument 'merely' relies on the truth of the second premise. It would be unreasonable for me to claim that the second premise, which can plausibly be doubted, needs to be revealed as incoherent or decisively disproved – or its negation proved – by Craig in order for him to escape the conclusion; his inductive arguments for God's existence would presumably not be sufficient.[38] Craig need only not accept the premise, perhaps because it has not been convincingly argued for and/or because it is controversial. It is worth adding that in *Reasonable Faith*, Craig seemingly acknowledges that premises should be uncontroversial.[39] Moving forward, it is this description of a good argument, Craig's own, which shall be used to

[36]William Lane Craig. "Atheism: Five Arguments for God," accessed 18/11/2013, http://www.henrycenter.org/media/cci/Craig-Atheism.pdf. Cf. a more recent discussion where Craig admits the uncertainty around his premises and conclusions, further noting that "in order [to] guarantee that the argument's conclusion be at least 51% probable, the conjunction of its premises must be 51% probable". See William Lane Craig. "Deductive Arguments and Probability," accessed 01/06/2016, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/deductive-arguments-and-probability.

[37]Craig's fondness for false dichotomies will be discussed throughout. Also, Craig's comment about which premises are "more plausible" seems hugely problematic, given that naturalists to whom these arguments are directed will disagree with Craig on what is plausible. As Graham Oppy says (personal communication, May 12, 2015), "If I find your premises implausible—improbable—then you need to find new arguments. End of story." Indeed, there is little pragmatic use in reaching the controversial conclusion with controversial premises.

[38]If Craig could properly disprove the second premise, *a priori*, there would be no need at all for his case for theism. He could replace all his current arguments with: 1) 'God does not exist' is logically incoherent. 2) Therefore, God does exist.

[39]Craig (RF), p. 56. Interestingly, p. 60 reveals that Craig is undeterred if his arguments fail, with Craig deferring to God. We discuss God's efforts later, when considering the argument from hiddenness.

judge his arguments, partly so as to grant him the best possible chance of success, along with Bayesian/probabilistic considerations. In other words, a determination shall be made, by examining the evidence and referencing scholars with specialist knowledge, on if Craig's premises are true or probably true. More importantly, it will be considered if Craig's arguments actually support his brand of supernaturalism or theism, rather than alternatives, so that the discussion is not solely focussed on the validity or soundness of arguments that may ultimately be insufficient or irrelevant.[40]

It will also be determined if Craig's conclusions logically flow from these premises. Craig's probabilistic reasoning seems realistic, as indeed, it may be the case that nothing is known with complete certainty.[41] Probabilistic reasoning also provides opportunities to invert the arguments, in the sense that an alternative hypothesis, i.e., a non-theistic one, could be shown to be more probable. This allows for comparisons between theism and non-theistic god-concepts, as well as scenarios in which no god is involved at all. I shall also use a method of subsidiary argument, or alternatively, a method of independent objection, so that the discussion is not cut short at the first major problem, and other positive and negative points about the arguments and the overall case can be discovered and highlighted. Swinburne's framework may also be invoked in order to determine to what extent Craig's arguments succeed or fail.

In other words, Craig's arguments shall be judged as being deductive arguments, P-inductive arguments, or 'merely' C-inductive arguments that do not demonstrate that theism is true, more likely than not. Controversial premises shall be noted, and counter-examples sought, in order to adequately judge the soundness of the arguments. All this should help determine if Craig's overall case –his arguments taken as a whole – for theism succeeds, and aid in interpreting to what extent it succeeds. For example, if Craig's arguments could convince an intelligent agnostic or atheist that Christian theism is likely, his arguments can be declared to be very successful indeed. If Craig's case convinces the strict naturalist as to the existence of something beyond the physical realm, but not necessarily of the truth of theism or Christian theism, it is a failure, given Craig's ultimate aim. If the arguments only have the power to convince those that already believe, then they serve no practical use outside of possibly shoring up a believer's faith.

[40]In a technical sense, if these arguments are *presented* as arguments for theism, then they are actually invalid if they also can argue for alternatives.

[41]Some critics of religion may argue that given what is potentially at stake (such as killing or dying for a religion and life after death), absolute certainty, or at least a very high level of certainty (such as 95%, 97%, or 99%) for the truth of a religion is a reasonable requirement. Theists might object that if high stakes mandate high credences, then agnosticism is the only acceptable outcome. That may be the case.

1.4 The Historical Approach

While the second part of this book effectively refutes Craig's arguments, and the third part deals with many other important considerations regarding the case for theism in general, the focus then moves on to Craig's argument for his 'specific' god, which revolves around Jesus of Nazareth.[42] As Jesus is a purported historical figure, and the sources used in Historical Jesus studies tend to comprise the books of the New Testament and related near-contemporary documents, it is the methods of historians and biblical scholars that shall be used. At first glance, the methodologies employed by historians and biblical scholars would seem to be very different from those of the scientifically minded analytic philosophers. However, both fields make use of probabilistic reasoning, which shall be made clear in the subsection on Bayes' Theorem, below. Before that however, and before the methods of the subject matter experts are considered, how historical sources ought to be treated is an issue of great import.

In trying to determine the trustworthiness and accuracy of the primary and secondary sources used to establish the authentic events of Jesus' life as portrayed in the New Testament, a historiographical problem that is faced by all historians is immediately encountered. Historians cannot hope to proclaim their hypotheses with complete certainty. Rather, the historian is concerned with what *probably* happened in the past (historical constructionism).[43] Fortunately, historiographers have developed methods in order to judge the reliability of historical sources. It is important to note that historical sources are often classified as being primary or secondary. Primary sources would generally be relics (such as artefacts) or testimonies (such as written documents) created by eyewitnesses (including the subject, if appropriate), contemporary to the events in question.[44] Though historians find much to dispute about, one thing that all historians find agreement on is the importance of primary sources that, unlike secondary sources, are direct sources of evidence.

Influential nineteenth-century historian Leopold von Ranke outlined the importance of primary sources, stating that historians ought to rely more on narratives of *eyewitnesses*, and on genuine and original documents.[45] Clearly, given that primary sources are closer to the events in question and thus probably more reliable, they are crucially important to scholars interested in establishing which aspects of Jesus' life-story are authentic. When investigating a primary source (or indeed, any source),

[42]To put it alternatively, the first parts of this monograph are concerned with the god/s that exist/s. Part 4 is primarily considered with the religious tradition that that god/s revealed herself/himself/themselves through.

[43]Bart D. Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist?: The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: HarperOne, 2012), p. 37.

[44]Martha C. Howell and Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 17–20.

[45]Leopold von Ranke, Sarah Austin, and Robert Arthur Johnson, *History of the Reformation in Germany* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1905), p. xi.

questions historians may ask to determine its usefulness may revolve around when the source was produced (date), where it was produced (localisation), by whom it was produced (authorship), the pre-existing material influencing the source (analysis), the original form of the source (integrity), and the evidential value of the source's contents (credibility).[46] Twentieth-century historian Louis Gottschalk, in his work *Understanding History*, gives some insight into how secondary sources can be tested by the historian, noting the important role that primary sources play:

> In cases where he uses secondary witnesses, however, he does not rely upon them fully. On the contrary, he asks: (1) On whose primary testimony does the secondary witness base his statements? (2) Did the secondary witness accurately report the primary testimony as a whole? (3) If not, in what details did he accurately report the primary testimony?[47]

The answers to such questions will not provide complete certainty as to how reliable historical documents are in reporting what actually happened, although they do aid in judging the extent to which a source could be trusted. The apologist, suspecting that these methods disadvantage the personal religious beliefs that they wish to argue for in a more scholarly manner, may object that such standards should only apply to more modern sources; that for some reason modern scholars should not have high expectations of ancient sources, such as the books of the New Testament. The historian can only accept, however, that ancient sources present them with *additional* limitations and challenges, and would not be justified in arbitrarily changing what is considered to be convincing evidence, simply because it is known beforehand that the evidence available is not particularly convincing. That New Testament historians do, in fact, lower the standards of evidence with regards to the biblical sources is discussed later in this introduction and in Part 4.[48]

1.5 Bayesian Reasoning

Now that the uncertain and probabilistic nature of history has been briefly noted, the similarities between scientific-philosophical reasoning and historical research shall be explained, before the discussion moves to common methods of biblical scholars. Historical arguments concerning Jesus rely on probabilistic and inductive reasoning, just as the philosophical case to be made for God also relies on probabilistic and inductive (and/or deductive) reasoning. The main difference between the two

[46]Gilbert J. Garraghan and Jean Delanglez, *A Guide to Historical Method* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1946), p. 168.

[47]Louis Reichenthal Gottschalk, *Understanding History: A Primer of Historical Method* (New York: Knopf, 1950), p. 165.

[48]Cf. Hershel Shanks, "How the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old Testament Differ: An Interview with David Noel Freedman – Part 1," *Bible Review* 9, no. 6 (1993): 34.

approaches is not to be found in the underlying methods themselves, but in the nature of the evidence. Whilst the evidence for the philosophical arguments might consist of empirical observations made by cosmologists for example, the direct evidence for historical theories about Jesus is comprised entirely of ancient documentary accounts. As the historian realises that history is probabilistic – and thus mathematical – in nature, and the use of mathematical tools such as the law of likelihood and Bayes' Theorem becomes feasible, it increasingly becomes apparent that the methods of philosophers of religion, historians, and biblical scholars can be considered to be fundamentally identical. Bayesian – or at least probabilistic – reasoning is arguably an ineliminable aspect of rational thinking. A simple form of Bayes' theorem appears below:

$$P(A|B) = \frac{P(B|A) \times P(A)}{P(B)}$$

Formulated in the eighteenth century by English Presbyterian minister Thomas Bayes, Bayes' theorem is a relatively simple formula that aids in calculating probabilities derived from a number of sources, and their associated probabilities. Rather than only considering a particular theory and the evidence that supports that theory, the Bayesian approach is to incorporate all the available evidence, partly via the all-important prior probabilities, and to also make determinations about the plausibility of alternative theories and how they fit with the evidence. In other words, thorough Bayesian analyses incorporate all the available evidence and test all possible explanations. As such, Bayesian reasoning, which can be inductive and abductive, is versatile and can make a claim to being a useful method for almost all academic disciplines, and not just for mathematics and the sciences.[49] In his impressive work on historiography, *Our Knowledge of the Past*, philosopher Aviezer Tucker argues not only that a Bayesian approach is useful to historians, but also that historical research already is Bayesian.[50] Indeed, no competent historian would reject the notion that they compare competing theories to the evidence and make what are essentially probabilistic determinations about the most likely theories. To do so would be to effectively admit that their assessments are as good as any amateur's.

[49]For an entertaining presentation of the history and versatility of Bayesian reasoning, see Sharon Bertsch McGrayne, *The Theory that Would Not Die: How Bayes' Rule Cracked the Enigma Code, Hunted Down Russian Submarines & Emerged Triumphant from Two Centuries of Controversy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011). Other useful books on Bayesian reasoning include John Earman, *Bayes or Bust? A Critical Examination of Bayesian Confirmation Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992) and Luc Bovens and Stephan Hartmann, *Bayesian Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[50]Tucker argues that historians, philosophers and scientists all employ Bayesian methods, and that even linguists can find Bayes' Theorem to be useful. See Aviezer Tucker, *Our Knowledge of the Past: A Philosophy of Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 22, 110, 117, 120, 134, 139.

Since a Bayesian approach is so useful in determining the probability of an explanation's being true, in consideration of all the available evidence,[51] it is entirely appropriate for judging the authenticity of various historical claims made about Jesus, such as whether he walked on water, turned water into wine, or rose from the dead. Independent historian Richard Carrier concurs and indicates that the famous theorem could even weigh in on the debate over whether Jesus existed at all as a historical person.[52] Hector Avalos, a professor of Religious Studies (Iowa State University), praises Carrier's application of Bayesian methods to the field of Biblical Studies, claiming that it could revolutionise how Historical Jesus studies are done.[53] Bayesian reasoning should particularly prove helpful in these philosophical and historical investigations, as it allows for the incorporation of new evidence that comes to light.[54] Here is a form of the theorem, more suited to these investigations, where P = probability, h = hypothesis, e = evidence and b = background knowledge:

$$P(h|e.b) = \frac{P(h|b) \times P(e|h.b)}{[P(h|b)] \times P(e|h.b) + [P(\sim h|b) \times P(e| \sim h.b)]}$$

This calculation relies on the probabilities of the truth of the theory considering background knowledge only (the all-important prior probability), and in considering the more relevant evidence in question. Crucially, this equation also takes into account alternative theories and how they interact with the evidence, so that the researcher will not be allowed to only additionally address contradictory evidence relevant to their own particularly theory. It is perhaps a preference for the latter method that has resulted in the "academic embarrassment" caused by a multitude of scholarly theories on who Jesus was, what he said, and what he did:

[51]Such probabilistic reasoning might never reveal the truth, but allows us to get closer to it. I liken it to a block of marble, which has a sculpture inside it, which has always been there. We use our logic and empirical observations to chip away at the detritus to reveal the work of art. We may never finish the job, but we can get closer and closer. Resorting to easy answers, like "God did it", does not bring us any closer to the truth; it merely stymies or even halts progress.

[52]Richard Carrier, *Proving History: Bayes's Theorem and the Quest for the Historical Jesus* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2012).

[53]Ibid., back cover endorsement.

[54]Because of this, the competing statistical approach of frequentism poses no threat to Bayesianism at all. More technically, Bayes' Theorem can be used by the strict Bayesian and by the frequentist, even if the latter does not make use priors. For a comparison of the two approaches, including some commentary on the increasing popularity of Bayesianism and pluralistic approaches, see Jan Sprenger's "Bayesianism vs. Frequentism in Statistical Inference", in Alan Hájek and Christopher Hitchcock, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Probability and Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). For some discussion on how both approaches can be adopted, see M. J. Bayarri and J. O. Berger, "The Interplay of Bayesian and Frequentist Analysis," *Statistical Science* 19, no. 1 (2004): 58–80. I arguably do just this, most obviously in my argument against miracles, where I appeal to historical frequencies, as well as scientific knowledge, in order to construct prior probabilities.

> But that stunning diversity is an academic embarrassment. It is impossible to avoid the suspicion that historical Jesus research is a very safe place to do theology and call it history, to do autobiography and call it biography.[55]

By making use of Bayesian methods, scholars will carefully consider all of the evidence and all of the possible hypotheses. They will also be required to be transparent with the probabilities of their claims, no longer being able to pass off a merely possible claim as being a plausible or probable one. This is crucial to a critique of religiously motivated arguments, as supernatural claims tend to be inherently implausible; that is, the prior probabilities of such hypotheses, based on current knowledge, are very low. These are, after all, not mundane claims such as "Sally ate breakfast this morning", which have higher prior probabilities and do not bear such a great evidential burden. The only way, then, to argue for the high probability of such supernatural claims, is to appeal to extraordinary evidence, which overwhelms the low prior probability in a somewhat exclusive manner (little help is offered by evidence that also fits well with alternative hypotheses, particularly when the latter are unencumbered by cripplingly low priors).

In other words, extraordinary claims do, in fact, require extraordinary evidence.[56] Despite the possible perception that such methods obviously and unfairly disadvantage theism, many theistic and atheistic philosophers of religion already employ Bayesian methods, as evidenced by Herman Philipse,[57] Richard Swinburne,[58] and a number of Christian scholars published in a philosophical volume edited by William Lane Craig.[59] Due to these considerations, and the fact that Craig is indeed making a probabilistic case for theism, it is trusted that the use of Bayesian reasoning in this project should be uncontroversial. This Bayesian approach merely systematises and makes transparent what competent historians and philosophers already do intuitively. Bayesian reasoning also avoids the so-called problem of induction, since it aims not to tell us what is true, but what is

[55] John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), p. xxviii.

[56] As noted by Carl Sagan, and later further popularised by Christopher Hitchens. See Adrian Malone, "Encyclopaedia Galactica," in *Cosmos: A Personal Voyage* (Arlington, VA: Public Broadcasting Service, 1980). This is very similar to Hume's Maxim.

[57] Philipse (GAS).

[58] Richard Swinburne, *The Resurrection of God Incarnate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[59] Robin Collins, "The Teleological Argument: An Exploration of the Fine-Tuning of the Universe," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); Timothy McGrew and Lydia McGrew, "The Argument from Miracles: A Cumulative Case for the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

reasonable to believe as true, based on the available evidence.[60] In fact, we employ Bayesian reasoning simply because we do not know what is true.

If further justification is required, Craig has actually explicitly and implicitly endorsed Bayesian reasoning on several occasions. For example, he directly applied Bayes' theorem to a question on Jesus' allegedly honourable burial, and further noted that the low prior probability in his calculation needed to be, could be, and supposedly was, overcome by favourable consequent probabilities.[61] Thus, though Craig may outwardly reject the sceptical maxim, he does understand that inherently implausible claims do need to be supported by sufficiently convincing evidence.[62] In any case, if such epistemic probabilistic reasoning were eschewed, the theist must explain how it can be known that their preferred hypothesis is *probably* true. It would seem strange to argue that a theory is probably true, while opposing transparent probabilistic reasoning.

1.6 Biblical Scholarship and the Criteria for Authenticity

As Craig's all-important Christological argument relies on a 'minimal facts' approach,[63] a thorough meta-critique of the methods of all biblical historians is here unnecessary. Nevertheless, even Craig's minimal facts are sourced via dubious methods, and often by scholars of questionable motives. In the previous section, it was observed that biblical scholars may not be properly accounting for all the

[60]This is akin to the pragmatic response to a question on why the scientific method – which is very much compatible with Bayesian probabilistic reasoning – should be so highly valued. Maybe it does not lead to certainty or truth, but it is useful. It allows us to make fairly accurate predictions, solve real-world problems, etc. Or as Richard Dawkins humorously put it at the University of Oxford: "If you base medicine on science, you cure people; if you base the design of planes on science, they fly; if you base the design of rockets on science, they reach the moon. It works, bitches." See Richard Dawkins and Stephen Law. "In Conversation with Richard Dawkins – Hosted by Stephen Law," accessed 24/02/2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zvkbiElAOqU. The theist/Christian might claim in kind that theistic Christianity 'works', with important follow-up questions being, "For what?" and "Why not some other religion or irreligion?" I suspect that if scientific/probabilistic reasoning confirmed theistic or supernaturalistic beliefs, that its ability to adjudicate would go unquestioned.

[61]William Lane Craig, "Was Jesus Buried in Shame? Reflections on B. McCane's Proposal," *The Expository Times* 115, no. 12 (2004): 404–409.

[62]For a single example of both, see William Lane Craig. "Stephen Law on the Non-existence of Jesus of Nazareth," accessed 25/02/2016, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/stephen-law-on-the-non-existence-of-jesus-of-nazareth. He first rejects the maxim, then goes on to describe what is effectively proper probabilistic and Bayesian reasoning, which is generally what the maxim summarises. Also, this, combined with comments in some of his debates, makes me suspect that he erroneously assumes that 'extraordinary evidence' necessarily means 'many pieces of evidence'.

[63]This approach supposedly uses only 'facts' almost unanimously accepted by scholars.

available evidence or the impact of alternative explanations, and that Bayesian-style reasoning would assist in their hypothesising. What follows then is a brief survey of the popular criteria for authenticity (tools used to determine what aspects of Jesus' life story are authentic) and the attitudes of biblical scholars. It is all too easy to suppose that most scholars who would dedicate their lives to studying the Bible would be Jews or Christians, and that this would result in a privileging of the biblical texts; this suspicion is not assuaged by Christian archaeologist and biblical scholar David Noel Freedman who remarks:

> We have to accept somewhat looser standards. In the legal profession, to convict the defendant of a crime, you need proof beyond a reasonable doubt. In civil cases, a preponderance of the evidence is sufficient. When dealing with the Bible or any ancient source, we have to loosen up a little; otherwise, we can't really say anything.[64]

New Testament scholar James Charlesworth (Princeton Theological Seminary) provides another example of an uncritical faith in the sources, arguing that, "we also should assume a tradition is authentic until evidence appears that undermines its authenticity."[65] Similarly, conservative biblical historian John Dickson (Macquarie University) surprisingly claims that historians agree "that there is a resurrection-shaped dent in the historical record."[66] Crossan's aforementioned suspicions of the theological nature of biblical research are clearly not unsubstantiated. Avalos similarly takes issue with the supposed lack of critical thinking skills of biblical scholars who simply accept (at least in part, as supernatural claims may be dismissed by some) what the Gospels say about Jesus, and also bemoans scholars "privileging" the texts.[67] Avalos further claims that biblical scholarship is primarily a religionist enterprise, boldly criticising the use of the Bible as a reliable source of historical

[64]Hershel Shanks, "How the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old Testament Differ: An Interview with David Noel Freedman – Part 1," *Bible Review* 9, no. 6 (1993): 34.

[65]James H. Charlesworth, *The Historical Jesus: An Essential Guide* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), p. 18. Cf. "the endeavours of the scholars, whether religious or not, are also often overtly or covertly theological in their methodological framework" and "the need to see the extant sources as historical texts, albeit ones in which the historical facts lie hidden, shares the worldview of the believers". See Herbert Berg and Sarah E. Rollens, "The historical Muḥammad and the historical Jesus: A comparison of scholarly reinventions and reinterpretations," *Studies in Religion* 37, no. 2 (2008): 271–272.

[66]John Dickson, *Life of Jesus: Who He Is and Why He Matters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), pp. 161–162.

[67]Hector Avalos, *The End of Biblical Studies* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2007), pp. 69, 77, 91, 117.

information.[68] John Gager also criticises the methods of his fellow biblical scholars, particularly with regards to the 'quest' for the historical Jesus:

> Rigorous historical method has been subordinated to religious and theological concerns. With dogged regularity, the desire to reach authentic Jesus material has led questers to sacrifice methodological rigor or to minimize the difficulties posed by the sources... Working hypotheses have tended to become methodological dogmas and hence immune to critical reassessment... I will argue that previous attempts at the quest have proceeded on unexamined assumptions with respect to one or another of these issues and that prospects for a responsible quest must remain pessimistic until new foundations can be formulated and laid down.[69]

Whether arguing for the Christ of Faith or a 'mere' Historical Jesus, New Testament scholars often subject the sources, namely the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke and John, to several criteria – the criteria of authenticity – in order to determine which portions of the Gospels can be said to be historically authentic.[70] However, the use of the criteria by biblical scholars is not without controversy, as demonstrated by Gager:

> A more serious problem is the patent circularity of the method in dealing with the Gospels. Apart from Paul, who says precious little about Jesus, the sources for our knowledge of early Christian communities are identical with the sources for the quest itself... it is difficult to see how else one might proceed responsibly to distinguish between "history" and "tradition" in the Gospels.[71]

One such criterion, that of *multiple independent attestation*, indicates that the more independent references to an event exist, the more likely the event happened.[72] This generally sound principle may not be particularly relevant in historical Jesus research, as few individual units of the Jesus tradition are multiply attested, and even then, establishing independence is very difficult, as the (often anonymous) texts tend

[68]Ibid., pp. 292, 339. On p. 340, Avalos points to the triviality of much work in the insular field, such as the grand quest to discover if Jesus had said "is better" or "better is". Avalos continues to voice his displeasure of the field in Hector Avalos, *The Bad Jesus: The Ethics of New Testament Ethics* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2015). Similar pointed criticisms regarding confessional approaches are sometimes levelled at the generally more secular field of Religious Studies. See Luther H. Martin and Donald Wiebe, "Religious Studies as a Scientific Discipline: The Persistence of a Delusion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80, no. 3 (2012): 587–597; William Arnal, Willi Braun, and Russell T. McCutcheon, eds., *Failure and Nerve in the Academic Study of Religion* (Sheffield, UK: Equinox, 2012).

[69]John G. Gager, "The Gospels and Jesus: Some Doubts about Method," *The Journal of Religion* 54, no. 3 (1974): 244–245.

[70]For a more comprehensive treatment of the inadequacies of the criteria, see Raphael Lataster, "Bayesian Reasoning: Criticising the 'Criteria of Authenticity' and Calling for a Review of Biblical Criticism," *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences* 5, no. 2 (2013): 271–293.

[71]John G. Gager, "The Gospels and Jesus: Some Doubts about Method," *The Journal of Religion* 54, no. 3 (1974): 258–259.

[72]Charlesworth (THJ), p. 23.

to rely on and influence each other.[73] Additionally, Gager theorises that a tradition's multiple attestation "will not establish anything beyond its early date."[74] For similar reasons, the criterion of *coherence* should also not be expected to yield decisive results in biblical research. Without a solid base of already authenticated sayings and deeds that certainly have their origins in a historical Jesus, using this criterion would be somewhat circular and derivative, as stated by Stanley Porter, who also notes that when it comes to the criteria for authenticity, "each of them seems subject to valid criticism".[75] Such methods would clearly have uses in arguing for inherently implausible historical theories, as evidenced by New Testament scholar John P. Meier (University of Notre Dame), who effectively argues that criteria such as that of multiple attestation and coherence could support Jesus' miracle traditions.[76]

The criterion of *embarrassment*, along with the similar criterion of *dissimilarity*, supposedly indicates that if a saying or event found in the Jesus story is embarrassing to Jews, early Christians (including the Gospel authors), or both, it is likely to be true.[77] Such highly speculative theorising is unconvincing, as the author might intentionally provide an embarrassing example to make a point (perhaps on humility), or to encourage the perception of authenticity and credibility, avoiding suspicion over constant 'beneficial' assertions. Moreover, given the diversity of Judaisms, and the diversity even of early Christianity,[78] it cannot be assumed that the (typically anonymous) author would find the event or teaching in question to be embarrassing. Biblical scholar Christopher Tuckett (University of Oxford) realises that "The very existence of the tradition may thus militate against its being regarded as 'dissimilar' to the views of 'the early church.'"[79] Additionally, Stephen Law notes that it is not unheard of that a new religion would make embarrassing and untruthful claims, pointing to the fantastic and "embarrassing" claims of ancient intergalactic wars made by Scientology founder, L. Ron Hubbard.[80]

[73]Eric Eve, "Meier, Miracle, and Multiple Attestation," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 3, no. 1 (2005): 23–45.

[74]John G. Gager, "The Gospels and Jesus: Some Doubts about Method," *The Journal of Religion* 54, no. 3 (1974): 260.

[75]Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 79–82.

[76]John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1994), pp. 630–631.

[77]Charlesworth (THJ), pp. 20–22.

[78]Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[79]Christopher Tuckett, "Sources and Methods," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 132.

[80]Stephen Law, "Evidence, Miracles and the Existence of Jesus," *Faith and Philosophy* 28, no. 2 (2011): 129–151.

An equally speculative criterion, that of *vividness*, supposes that detailed parts of the story are likely authentic.[81] Obviously, both genuine and fictitious reports could be very brief or exhaustively detailed; in fact, vividness would generally be expected of fiction, as demonstrated by the exemplary work of J. R. R. Tolkien.[82] Likewise, no reasonable scholar would posit a historical Harry Potter on account of the vivid descriptions of London found in Rowling's popular novels.[83] Herein is also a direct contradiction with the criterion of *least distinctiveness*. If scant and detailed descriptions both point to historically authentic deeds and sayings, scholars could 'authenticate' any aspect about any theorised Jesus, or indeed, any other historical or mythological figure. Another pair of potentially contradictory[84] – yet also complementary – criteria would be the criterion of *Greek context* and the criterion of *Aramaic context*. These criteria could realistically only hope to establish the nationality or cultural influences of the author, and together, could 'validate' every word of the New Testament. Interestingly, the seemingly less-frequently used and superior criteria of *historical plausibility*, *contextual plausibility*, and *natural probability*, actually reduce to Bayesianism. On the criteria of authenticity, and the quest for the Historical Jesus, Gager concludes:

> Basically, it will not be possible to write a biography of Jesus. For this we lack all of the essential data. We know virtually nothing of his parents, siblings, early years (childhood, adolescence, early adulthood), friends, education, religious training, profession, or contacts with the broader Greco-Roman world. We know neither the date of his birth, nor the length of his public ministry (the modern consensus of two or three years is an educated guess based largely on the Gospel of John), nor his age at death (Luke 3:23 states that he was "about thirty when he began"). Thus even an optimistic view of the quest can envisage no more than a collection of "authentic" sayings and motifs devoid of context. How, then, can the historian hope to interpret this material and construct even a sketchy image of Jesus in the absence of these fundamental data? This, after all, is the goal of the quest.[85]

Though it was not the intention, this brief overview of the methods used by Historical Jesus 'questers' – somewhat necessitated by the inadequacy of the sources – seems already to indicate that attempts to authenticate the more mundane and plausible aspects of Jesus' life story, let alone the more fantastic notions such as his supposed divinity and alleged resurrection, are hopeless. It seems that even with a minimal facts approach, admittedly superior to merely asserting the truth of all

[81] New Testament scholar Craig A. Evans calls this criterion "dubious". See Craig A. Evans, *Life of Jesus Research: An Annotated Bibliography*, rev. ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1996), p. 128.

[82] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* (London: HarperCollins, 2007); J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit; The Lord of the Rings* (London: HarperCollins, 2011); J. R. R. Tolkien, *A Middle English Vocabulary: Designed for Use with Sisam's Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925); J. R. R. Tolkien and Christopher Tolkien, *The History of Middle-Earth* (London: HarperCollins, 2002).

[83] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001).

[84] John G. Gager, "The Gospels and Jesus: Some Doubts about Method," *The Journal of Religion* 54, no. 3 (1974): 260–261.

[85] Ibid.: p. 261.

biblical claims, Craig should find it enormously difficult to authenticate any aspect of Jesus' life, let alone those claims that stand in contrast to current scientific understandings.

1.7 The Sociological Approach

In the final part of this book, Craig's impact, methods, and some other sociological aspects are speculated upon. I rely on my own observations, and consider the opinions of his fans as regards Durkheim's notion of sacredness. First, the prominence of evidentialism within Christendom is contemplated, with reference made to both ancient and contemporary forms of the faith. I then produce a classification of believers, largely influenced by Herman Philipse, to argue that Christian evidentialists like Craig form a significant part of the Christian world. The value of evidence, to religion and in general, is then considered. It will be argued that not only is evidence important to religion, but that the commitment to evidentialism – whether in the service of traditional religion or naturalism – can itself be perceived as being religious. Furthermore, discussions with attendees at Craigian events, and reader reviews, will be utilised in order to determine if Craig merely aggrandizes his religion, or if he has become somewhat of an object of religious devotion in his own right.

Craig's polemics in his debates are also dissected, and recent findings from the cognitive sciences are appealed to, in order to explain part of Craig's success, and indeed, beliefs. Apart from his popular books, several debates will be analysed, in order to determine what methods he employs in order to convince his audiences that his arguments are good arguments. A brief survey of some recent research on rationality and belief will be produced. The research topics include hot cognition, cognitive biases, and the role of evolution in explaining why our brains function the way they do. A determination will then be made about whether such research illuminates some of the reasons for Craig's relative triumphs.

Chapter 2
The Case for Theism

Here the focus will be on Craig's arguments for the 'generic' god or gods. That is, it examines the arguments that supposedly demonstrate the existence of Craig's god, without yet identifying the particular way that this god has revealed itself to humanity. Not only will the individual arguments be judged for their logical validity and soundness, but also the manner in which they support each other and Craig's case in establishing the truth of theism shall be explored. With these arguments, Craig does not merely wish to convince his audience of a creator, or a designer, or of just 'some type' of god. Craig wishes to convince his audience that a particular type of god exists, to wit, the god commonly recognised as 'God'; that is, the god of classical theism.[1] Craig's understanding of theism shall be clarified, before the arguments are examined. The arguments that are analysed herein are Craig's contingency, cosmological, teleological, axiological, ontological, and experiential arguments.

2.1 Craig's Cumulative Case Strategy and God/Theism Defined

It is interesting to note that Craig does not provide a definition of 'God' at the outset of his cumulative case. This tactic could be attractive, as it indicates that God might only be revealed at the conclusion of the case. In other words, each argument will argue for one or more aspects of God, but this will only become obvious towards the end. In contrast, Swinburne reveals the outcome at the very outset of his own case for theism:

[1]Craig later argues that this is the 'specific God' of Christianity, as has been revealed in history, which is discussed in Part 4.

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R. Lataster, *The Case Against Theism*, Sophia Studies in Cross-cultural Philosophy of Traditions and Cultures 26, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-90793-2_2

> I take the proposition 'God exists' (and the equivalent proposition 'There is a God') to be logically equivalent to 'there exists necessarily a person without a body (i.e. a spirit) who necessarily is eternal, perfectly free, omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good and the creator of all things'. I use 'God' as the name of the person picked out by this description... The claim that there is a God is called theism. Theism is, of course, the core belief of the creeds of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.[2]

Swinburne not only helpfully provides readers with a practical definition of 'God', in contradistinction with more ambiguous notions of God, but he also provides us with a useful definition of the god-concept that is 'theism'.[3] This definition of theism will also be applied to Craig's case, though it is not yet completely clear what Craig is describing when he uses the term 'God'. That Swinburne is quite clear about his concept of God is very important, as he intends to use theism as an explanatory hypothesis. Craig arguably does likewise, though it may seem he is building up to his concept of God as his case progresses. Since Craig does indeed mention God long before he has reached the conclusion of his case, it might be expected that Craig clearly define what he means by the term 'God' at the outset. Whether or not Craig intends to clarify the identity and properties of his god at the conclusion of his case, it is still crucial that his critics understand, from the beginning, what he means when he uses the term 'God'. Like Swinburne, Craig uses 'God' or 'theism' as an explanatory hypothesis. Before 'God' is even defined, Craig invokes the term in his premises and conclusions. It should be obvious then, that clarity around the term is imperative.

Whatever Craig's intended strategy, it is clear that if he posits God before the conclusion of his case, it becomes necessary to understand what he means by 'God'. It is only then that such arguments can truly be judged as being valid and sound. When considering the probabilistic nature of Craig's arguments, determining the prior (and therefore, the posterior) probabilities is impossible if clarity is lacking over terms such as 'God' and 'theism'. The first argument to be analysed, the contingency argument, demonstrates this. God is appealed to before it has been made clear that Craig considers God to be an immaterial being. The claim that God is immaterial is crucial to calculating the prior probability of any hypothesis involving God, so that it becomes necessary to know at the outset of his case that Craig considers God to be immaterial, even before Craig actually does introduce and defend the concept. While Craig does not seem to provide a single and clear definition of 'God' at the outset of his case, unlike Swinburne, this definition can

[2] Swinburne (EG), p. 7.

[3] The terms 'god-concept', 'god-conception', and 'god-model' are used interchangeably in this book. The terms are primarily used to distinguish between high-level 'types' of the divine such as theism, polytheism, alternative monotheisms, including the deisms, and pantheism.

be constructed by referring to only two of his arguments. In his defence of the *kalām* cosmological argument, Craig explains that he believes that:

> a personal Creator of the universe exists, who is uncaused, beginningless, changeless, immaterial, timeless, spaceless, and unimaginably powerful. This, as Thomas Aquinas was wont to remark, is what everybody means by "God."[4]

In his discussions of Plantinga's ontological argument, Craig adds that God is omniscient, omnipotent and morally perfect.[5] This is virtually identical to Swinburne's view of God, which Craig goes so far as endorsing on his website:

> Richard Swinburne, a prominent Christian philosopher, treats "God" as a proper name of the person referred to by the following description: a person without a body (i.e., a spirit) who necessarily is eternal, perfectly free, omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good, and the creator of all things. This description expresses the traditional concept of God in Western philosophy and theology… Since moral goodness is a great-making property, the greatest conceivable being must be morally perfect (as well as have the other superlative properties listed by Swinburne).[6]

To this clearly monotheistic interpretation,[7] we can also add the traits that God is revelatory,[8] transcendent,[9] immutable,[10] perfect,[11] and his[12] intentions are inscrutable.[13] In order to afford Craig the greatest chance of success with his cumulative case, his individual arguments will not be judged solely by the success or failure in proving the existence of this particular hypothetical being. That would arguably be more appropriate at the conclusion of this critique of his case for the 'generic' god. This Craigian definition of God (and by extension, theism) will be used however, in critiquing Craig's arguments, when he – perhaps prematurely – invokes the term in the arguments' premises, conclusions, and commentaries.

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[4]Craig (RF), p. 154.

[5]Ibid., p. 184.

[6]William Lane Craig. "Defining "God"," accessed 19/11/2013, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/defining-god.

[7]Also see Craig (RF), pp. 155, 300.

[8]Ibid., pp. 249, 258.

[9]Ibid., pp. 50, 108, 111, 152, 264.

[10]Ibid., pp. 152–154, 254.

[11]William Lane Craig. "Two Arguments Against God," accessed 08/07/2016, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/two-arguments-against-god. Craig prefers the term 'maximally great', and here says these terms are essentially synonyms.

[12]This book will avoid exclusively referring to God as a male.

[13]Craig links this to God's being "free". See Craig (RF), pp. 275–276. See also Craig (OG), pp. 158–161.

2.2 The Contingency Argument

In *Reasonable Faith* and *On Guard*, Craig begins his cumulative case with his argument from contingency, which is derived from the Leibnizian cosmological argument.[14] In considering Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's question, "*Why is there something rather than nothing?*", Craig alludes to the need to explain why the universe exists, which I hope would result in similar critical thought about what explains God's existence.[15] Craig is adamant that this is not an argument for a first cause, but for a sufficient reason, or explanation, of the universe's existence.[16] That it is explanations, whatever they may be, and not causes that are being discussed by Craig is somewhat logical, given that Craig might wish to avoid questions over God's potential cause, which could lead to an infinite regress of causes. This modal argument essentially reducing to a first cause argument would also make it redundant, given his well known and immediately proceeding *kalām* cosmological argument. Craig's formulation of the contingency argument:

(1) Anything that exists has an explanation of its existence, either in the necessity of its own nature or in an external cause.
(2) If the universe has an explanation of its existence, that explanation is God.
(3) The universe exists.
(4) Therefore, the universe has an explanation of its existence. (from 1,3)
(5) Therefore, the explanation of the existence of the universe is God. (from 2,4)[17]

It can further be concluded, especially since Craig finds that "this is a good argument for God's existence":[18]

(6) Therefore, God exists. (from 5)

2.2.1 Premise 1 – The Necessity of Explaining Craig's 'Explanation'

Craig acknowledges that a modest version of the principle of sufficient reason underpins the first premise.[19] If something exists, there is a reason, or an explanation for its existence. Craig then asserts that his first premise allows for the existence of brute facts. Given that brute facts are generally taken to be inexplicable, and indeed that brute facts undermine the principle of sufficient reason, it would seem that there

[14]Craig (RF), pp. 106–111; Craig (OG), pp. 53–65.
[15]See Craig (RF), p. 99.
[16]"Leibniz is not seeking a cause at all, but an explanation for the world". See ibid., p. 99.
[17]Ibid., p. 106.
[18]Ibid., p. 111.
[19]Ibid., p. 107.

is already a critical problem with the first premise in Craig's first argument.[20] It must be noted however, that Craig acknowledged the possibility of inexplicable *facts*, not necessarily inexplicable *things*. Indeed, Craig affirms that every *thing* must have an explanation of its existence, either by the necessity of its own nature or by its being contingent, or unnecessary, and also caused. There is a major problem here, with Craig eliding the possibility of contingent things that are uncaused. He has not argued for this being impossible, but merely implicitly assumed it. Already rejecting the first premise, and thus the argument, I shall employ some charity and attempt to interpret what Craig might actually mean and/or how the argument might be salvaged.

Many would find Craig's first premise unobjectionable,[21] even benign and unexceptional, in that it seemingly states that each thing that exists is either necessary or unnecessary. With this realisation, Craig's very use of the term 'explanation' in the first premise itself requires an explanation. Unless Craig intends to commit the ambiguity fallacy, his use of the term 'explanation' is unnecessary. Being charitable by not throwing out the premise and argument out immediately, here is an altered form of Craig's first premise:

(1′) Anything that exists is either necessary or unnecessary.[22]

This altered first premise also presents a major problem. The rest of the argument makes constant use of the term 'explanation' which is now being questioned. Furthermore, reworking the argument to reflect the altered first premise renders it unintelligible. There is some aspect of this argument that is deeply flawed, and it is suspected that Craig's 'reasons' or 'explanations' are really statements on causation. After all, apart from claiming that necessary things are necessary, and that unnecessary things are unnecessary, Craig only describes the former as being uncaused and the latter as being caused by something external.[23] Here is a radically altered argument, seemingly more in line with Craig's intentions, and thus hopefully more transparent:

(1) Anything that exists is either uncaused or externally caused.
(2) If the universe is externally caused, that cause is God.
(3) The universe exists.
(4) Therefore, the universe is externally caused. (from 1,3)
(5) Therefore, the cause of the universe is God. (from 2,4)
(6) Therefore, God exists. (from 5)

[20]Cf. Ludwig Fahrbach, "Understanding Brute Facts," *Synthese* 145, no. 3 (2005): 449.

[21]It actually precludes inexplicable things and the self-caused, which shall be discussed further on.

[22]Alternatively, "Anything that exists is either necessary or caused."

[23]"According to (1) there are two kinds of being: necessary beings, which exist of their own nature and so have no external cause of their existence, and contingent beings, whose existence is accounted for by causal factors outside themselves". See Craig (RF), p. 107.

The argument is now even more obviously logically invalid and explicitly question-begging. (4) no longer follows from (1) and (3). It is unknown if the universe is caused, if the cause is external, why the cause is God if it is indeed externally caused, and this version further allows speculation over God's potential cause, unless it is simply assumed that God must be the 'first cause'. Also, this argument would thus reduce to a first cause argument after all, despite Craig's insistence to the contrary. Such an argument is unnecessary considering that the very next argument in Craig's case is his *kalām* cosmological argument. In fact, this more transparent formulation of Craig's contingency argument is actually the *kalām* argument, with less, that is, zero, evidence. This conclusion relies on the assumption that Craig's 'explanations' are in fact his causal assertions. There are several reasons for supposing that this is so.

Firstly, the claim that God's existence explains the universe's existence is technically invalid. It is no more valid than the claim that the existence of a tree is explained by the existence of a pebble. God's mere existence does not at all explain why the universe exists. It could be supposed however, as theists are wont to do, that God created the universe, so let us replace 'God' with 'God's creative activity'. God *caused* the universe to come into existence. Now that is an explanation, of sorts.[24] One that reinforces my point. Furthermore, Craig does not trouble to explain what an 'explanation' is, precisely. This would presumably be crucial, given that he insists that an explanation is not a cause. Instead, Craig explains that his first premise discusses two types of things: necessary and unnecessary (contingent) things. To Craig, necessary things "exist of their own nature and so have no external cause of their existence".[25] In other words, necessary things are uncaused things. Craig further explains that the existence of unnecessary things "is accounted for by causal factors outside themselves".[26] In other words, unnecessary things are caused things. Apart from matters of causal relations, Craig offers no definitions for the terms 'explanation', 'necessary', and 'contingent'.

That Craig leaves such vital terms unclearly defined is no small matter; Craig's term, 'explanation', itself requires an explanation, and a definition of 'necessary' is also necessary.[27] Indeed, Craig's fellow Christian philosopher Richard Swinburne acknowledges that the proposition of God's existence can only be said to be logically necessary, "if and only if it is coherent and its negation is incoherent".[28] The proposition that God does not exist is not self-contradictory, unless God is defined tautologically, so God's existence cannot merely be claimed to be necessary, in this

[24]It has not yet been established that the universe was created, or caused, which is the focus of the next argument in Craig's case.

[25]Craig (RF), p. 107.

[26]Ibid., p. 107.

[27]If this is overstating, consider at least that there is no interpretation of 'necessity' and 'explanation' on which atheists will accept both of the first two premises.

[28]Swinburne (CT), pp. 243–244. Technically, 'formally contradictory' may be a clearer term than 'incoherent'.

purely logical sense. Swinburne also argues that God's existence is not physically necessary either, in the sense of being causally inevitable, as God is supposed to be uncaused.[29] Craig might prefer – and seems to embrace – John Hick's (an erstwhile mentor of Craig's)[30] and Swinburne's concept of 'ontological necessity', which declares that necessary things are uncaused:

> A proposition *p* is necessary if and only if it is true, but the truth of what it states is not (was not, or will not be) dependent on anything, the description of which is not entailed by *p*.[31]

If Craig employs this concept of 'ontological necessity'[32] in 'proving' God however, he effectively assumes the truth of the proposition (theism) in the first place, which is the very thing under investigation.[33] It is left quite mysterious then, what Craig really means by 'necessary' and how he would be justified in eventually declaring God's existence to be necessary, without simply assuming God's existence or defining God as a being that exists necessarily.[34] Perhaps Craig's version of necessity is Hick's ontological necessity, altered to incorporate a crucial element of Craig's interpretation of Thomas Aquinas' Third Way: "So there must be a First Being which is absolutely necessary in itself. In this Being, essence and existence are not distinct; in some mysterious way its nature is existence".[35] It is surely doubtful however, that Craig could justify God's supposed necessary existence, by an ad hoc appeal to 'some mystery'. Carolyn Morillo also recognised that one of the major problems with contingency arguments is the disagreement over the interpretations of key terms such as 'necessary'.[36] Craig may himself recognise, when contrasting the

[29]Ibid., pp. 260–276.

[30]Craig (OG), p. 70.

[31]Swinburne (CT), pp. 258–259.

[32]This so-called necessity is in actuality a contingency, as it has the question over whether the proposition is true or false built into the definition. In other words, the proposition could be false, and labelling something's existence 'ontologically necessary' is to acknowledge that it might not exist. Furthermore, if God does not exist, the universe, which does exist, can be labelled as 'necessary'. This definition is also appreciated, as it would be peculiar that something that is not known to exist is declared to be necessary, while something that is known to exist is declared to be unnecessary. Interestingly, in assuming that God is necessary, which by his definition entails that God exists, Craig seems to be merely defining God into existence.

[33]Of course, he has not explicitly claimed that God is necessary in this argument, though it is reasonable to think that he believes so, particularly when being necessary is generally seen as an essential property of 'God'. More relevantly, his first two premises did assume that the universe is not necessary.

[34]Particularly when God's existence is in question, he cannot be said to be logically necessary, physically necessary, or ontologically necessary; nor is it appropriate to merely define 'God' as necessarily existing. It is unclear in what way Craig can justifiably claim that God is necessary. Naturalists might also claim that the universe is ontologically necessary; that the universe is known to exist may provide them with relatively more justification. In any case, if 'ontological necessity' has valid application, it must be explained why it can apply to God and not to the natural universe.

[35]Craig (RF), p. 98.

[36]Carolyn R. Morillo, "The Logic of Arguments from Contingency," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 37, no. 3 (1977): 408.

concepts of Aquinas' uncaused cause and Leibniz's self-explanatory being,[37] that "Many philosophers have confused these".[38] Clarification from Craig would have been helpful.

That Craig's explanations actually allude to causation can be tested via Craig's example of a translucent ball being found in the woods. To Craig, it would be "quite bizarre that the ball simply exists inexplicably".[39] Indeed, the ball is either caused, as it is 'unnecessary', or uncaused, as it is 'necessary'. It may also be the case that Craig associates his use of the term 'explanation' to descriptions of causation, so that God can be claimed to be uncaused rather than being reduced to being a 'mere' inexplicable brute fact, which also leaves open the possibility of the universe being an inexplicable brute fact. And yet, in doing so the argument amounts to an inferior version of the first cause argument. Furthermore, I suspect that Craig unsportingly seeks to take advantage of the discomfort certain sceptics may feel in declaring the universe to be 'necessary', when they might otherwise feel no discomfort in declaring the universe to be simply 'uncaused', or even 'inexplicable'.

As was earlier noted, the first premise, as with Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason, explicitly and inexplicably precludes things that exist inexplicably. Quantum mechanics however, seems to indicate that things could possibly occur or exist inexplicably, as the most basic constituents of matter can behave indeterministically.[40] The effect of this objection is uncertain for a number of reasons, such as that quantum indeterminism is possibly illusory; there may be order underlying the apparent chaos.[41] Craig nevertheless seems to endorse aspects of quantum-mechanical indeterminacy, when he discusses the possibility of "A universe consisting of a totally different collection of quarks", in order to combat the possibility of a necessary universe.[42] In attempting to justify (2), Craig inadvertently argues against (1), to some extent. The first premise also relies on intuitive understandings of causation. Human intuition evolves at the macro level, however, and cannot be expected to easily lead to the typically counter-intuitive implications of physics at the quantum level; early humans, typically concerned with short-term survival, employed heuristic thinking, and did not always need to think very deeply

[37] 'Self-explanatory being' could well be an explanatory solecism, in the vein of "I think that 'A because A'". In other words, nothing can be self-explanatory. On the other hand, the notion of an uncaused cause seems reasonable. This is just something that has no explanation, or if it is a necessary thing, has no explanation of its necessity.

[38] Yet, perhaps he is oblivious. The greater context of this quotation refers to the notion of God as a self-caused being, which Craig rejects. See Craig (RF), p. 99. Note again that while 'uncaused cause' is coherent, 'self-explanatory being' may be an explanatory solecism.

[39] Ibid., p. 107.

[40] Adolf Grünbaum, "The Poverty of Theistic Cosmology," *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 55, no. 4 (2004): 556–567, 574–575.

[41] As is the case with various hidden variable theories. This however, could support the hypothesis that the universe is necessary and completely deterministic, which shall be explored soon.

[42] There may be shades of a composition fallacy in this tactic, as the existence of the universe might be necessary, with its physical constitution being contingent. See Craig (RF), p. 109.

about metaphysical questions. Recent efforts by philosophers and physicists speculatively explore the possibilities of self-cause and quantum correlations of indefinite causal order.[43] For a multitude of reasons, the argument seems already to have failed at the first premise, but there are many more problems with Craig's (original) second premise, which shall require several subsections to dissect.

2.2.2 Premise 2 – The Explanation/Cause of the Universe

If Craig's argument is logically valid, and his first premise were accepted, in addition to the unobjectionable third premise, which is that the universe exists, the soundness of the argument rests on the truth of the second premise.[44] In order to highlight the numerous issues with (2), the revelation that this is indeed a causal argument shall temporarily be put aside. Apart from the argument-ending fact that Craig merely and gratuitously assumes that the existence of the universe is not 'necessary', whatever it is that he means by that term, Craig's second premise is bold. Without yet knowing what or who God is, and if God even exists, Craig is confident in putting forth God as the explanation of the universe, if the universe has an explanation, rather than some other possible explanation. Craig has an unorthodox method in supporting his claim. He refers to what "Atheists typically assert", presenting a proof by contraposition:

A. If atheism is true, then the universe has no explanation of its existence

A′. If the universe has an explanation of its existence, then atheism is not true

Craig argues that atheists assert the conditional statement (A), and that this is logically equivalent to its contrapositive (A') and also to the second premise, which would mean that God exists if the universe had an explanation, and thus, "most atheists are implicitly committed to (2)".[45] There are numerous issues with Craig's attempt to foist his view upon 'atheists'. Firstly, it does not follow that facts about the universe can be derived from what some group of people believe or assert.[46] Secondly, whether the oft-imprecise Craig has clarified this or not, he seemingly

[43]Quentin Smith, "The Reason the Universe Exists is that it Caused Itself to Exist," *Philosophy* 74, no. 4 (1999): 579–586; Ognyan Oreshkov, Fabio Costa, and Časlav Brukner, "Quantum Correlations with no Causal Order," *Nature Communications* 3, no. doi:10.1038/ncomms2076 (2012); Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design* (London: Bantam Press, 2010), pp. 226–227.

[44]An argument to the effect that the universe does not exist would be counter-productive and self-defeating, given the existence of the argument itself, and the person, or thing, making it. Some sort of universe clearly does exist, no matter how limited it might be.

[45]Craig (RF), p. 108.

[46]It is ironic that the people Craig appeals to here – strong atheists – are people he might consider deluded, and in any case, disagrees with on such fundamental issues.

employs an unnecessarily narrow definition of 'atheism'. Not all atheists assert that God does not exist, nor must all atheists deny the existence of all types of gods or supernatural entities.[47] The earlier clarification of 'God' in §2.1 will now prove particularly useful. Craig is not merely arguing for 'some god', but for the theistic god, also known as 'God'.

An atheist could plausibly reject 'God' and yet still believe in 'some god'. Craig inexplicably invokes 'God' in (2) rather than merely 'some explanation', or even 'some god'. Thirdly, (A), and by extension, (A'), is not necessarily what 'atheists' would assert. The 'atheists', and also the pantheists and others, could assert that the universe is necessary, which would entail, by Craig's reckoning, that it has an explanation; but one that has nothing to do with God or some other possible external cause. Fourthly, given the above, (A) and (A') are plainly false by Craig's own reckoning as (1) states that everything has an explanation, whether God exists or not. Ironically, instead of acknowledging that (A) and (A') are false, Craig accepts (A'), using it as support for his second premise, which entails that he must accept (A), which, at least if atheism is plausibly true, contradicts his first premise. Indeed, if (2) is equivalent to (A') as Craig claims (it is not, as shown below), then (2) is false also, and his argument fails.

Fifthly, (2) does not actually follow from or is logically equivalent to (A'), as Craig asserts.[48] Technically, the implication of (A') and (A), in light of (4), is merely that God *exists*, not that God *exists and is the explanation* of any other thing, such as the universe.[49] Sixthly, the supposed explanation, if it is an external cause, need not be God. As noted above, the explanation could be a non-theistic god, and could also be some other necessary thing. When Craig earlier explained the prime candidates for 'necessary things', he included "numbers, sets, and other mathematical objects".[50] Craig could of course argue that abstract objects such as numbers do not stand in causal relations, and that is exactly what he does.[51] Interestingly, if

[47]Philosopher Matthew McCormick has helpfully explained the many types of atheism and how some atheists go about justifying their non-belief in God. See Matthew McCormick. "Atheism," accessed 12/12/2015, http://www.iep.utm.edu/atheism.

[48]Craig (RF), p. 108.

[49]By Craig's reckoning, to say that something has an explanation of its existence is to say that it exists, and it is either caused or uncaused. So (A') merely says that God and the universe exist together; no monodirectional causal relationship between them is explicit. The converse of (A') could be true, and it could also be true that the universe causes and explains God. Also, if the converse of (A) is true (Craig does not prove otherwise), then the universe's non-existence entails God's non-existence, which means that God does not have to exist after all. Interestingly, at a Craigian debate I attended, I overheard an atheist that was taken in by this flawed logic.

[50]See Craig (RF), p. 107. That there are other things apart from God that are supposedly uncaused leads to some interesting possibilities that Craig does not address. Furthermore, these 'necessary' things can only be said to be necessary if they exist. But we do not know with certainty that numbers, or gods, really exist. Also, it may be the case that there are no necessary things that exist.

[51]Ibid., p. 108. Cf. Swinburne (CT), p. 301.

Craig's claim were true, then there is a precedent for necessary things – and thus God – not being able to cause anything, as numbers are known to be necessary, while God, Craig's only purported necessary thing that has causal powers, is not even known to exist. Despite the uncertainty over whether or not numbers can have causal powers, Craig inadvertently acknowledges, just as in his discussion of the first premise, that this is a causal argument after all. Many of these objections can now converge into each other. For example, a superior version of (A), one that 'atheists' would be less likely to reject:

A″. If atheism is true, then the universe is uncaused

The critic can simply assert a necessary, or uncaused universe. This eliminates the need for God as an explanation.[52] There are yet more issues with Craig's positing God as the universe's explanation, or cause. Craig assumes that part of what makes (2) so plausible is that "the universe, by definition, includes all of physical reality". He then concludes that, "the cause of the universe must (at least causally prior to the universe's existence) transcend space and time and therefore cannot be physical or material".[53] Apart from the fact that Craig has now given up on the façade that this is not a causal argument, he seems oblivious to definitions of the universe that may include all of reality (and not just, arbitrarily, 'physical reality' or 'natural reality'), as may be appropriate to monistic scenarios. In fact, certain pantheistic hypotheses could be said to be relatively more plausible in an empirical sense, and more robust, given that they do not rely on anything existing apart from the universe, unlike the theistic hypothesis. Also, on certain forms of pantheism, it would seemingly be incoherent to refer to 'god' as necessary and 'the universe' as unnecessary, and vice versa, as they would be the same thing.

Craig mistakenly makes the claim that "assuming the universe is all there is… begs the question in favor of atheism".[54] To many, that is precisely what 'the universe' refers to. The universe could include everything that exists, so that if some god exists, it is part of the universe. Many who believe in some god or gods – particularly certain types of pantheists – would actually be comfortable with this notion. Craig could object that such a universe is arbitrarily defined, and that such an entity could not be considered to be a singular object, though that may also true of what Craig calls the universe, and indeed for any definition of the term, which could cause problems for all cosmological arguments. Furthermore, Craig makes the critical and empirically undetermined assumption that there is indeed some non-physical thing that transcends the universe, so that while we cannot rule out

[52]Interestingly, Swinburne asserts that if God does not exist, the universe must be "ontologically necessary". See Swinburne (CT), p. 259.

[53]Craig (RF), p. 108.

[54]Craig (OG), p. 64. Also, in §2.3, I will briefly discuss Oppy's distinguishing between 'causal reality' and 'natural reality'.

Craig's view by mere definitional fiat, it is actually he who "begs the question". Also guilty of reification, Craig's appeal to an unembodied mind is question begging, at least to many critics, as there is no conclusive evidence that unembodied minds exist.[55] Nor is it obvious that the unembodied mind that allegedly caused the universe must be God, especially since the concept is not necessarily incompatible with naturalism.

2.2.3 *Premise 2 – The Contingency of the Universe*

It is right for Craig to assume that the universe has an explanation. By his reckoning, everything does. Even God has an explanation. But Craig must defend his assertion that the universe is contingent or unnecessary; that it must have an external cause. The universe or some Aristotelian *hypokeimenon*/substratum underlying it, which itself could be described as 'the universe', could be necessary. Craig does acknowledge that the "atheist or agnostic" could simply claim that the "universe exists necessarily" and, once again, displays an unorthodox style in addressing it.[56] Craig seems to be setting up a false dichotomy by forcing critics of this argument, who must all be strong – and apparently male – atheists in his mind, to accept that embracing an uncaused and necessary universe is to accept some occult notion that they should also be uncomfortable with. Even when the critic is trying to 'avoid' God, they still do not avoid god:

> This is, however, an extremely bold suggestion which atheists have not been eager to embrace… No atheist will, I think, dare to suggest that some quarks, though looking just like ordinary quarks, have the special occult property of being necessary, so that any universe that exists would have to include them.[57]

> What can the atheist do at this point? He has a more radical alternative open to him. He can retrace his steps, withdraw his objection to premise 1, and say instead that, yes, the universe *does* have an explanation of its existence. But that explanation is: The universe exists by a

[55]The mind is only known to be an abstract object – a hypothetical construct – so that referring to the mind as a concrete instantiation is fallacious. In this sense, Swinburne's similar concept of the "bodiless person" may be marginally superior. See Swinburne (CT), p. 101. Note that even the artificial intelligences of computers rely on a physical central processing unit. Cognitive scientist Marvin Minsky presents a comprehensive argument for the natural and physical underpinnings of mental faculties. See Marvin Lee Minsky, *The Emotion Machine: Commensense Thinking, Artificial Intelligence, and the Future of the Human Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006).

[56]Craig (RF), pp. 108–109.

[57]Ibid., p. 109. Incidentally, I am unaware of any physicists that think that there were quarks in the very earliest stages of the universe. The critic could also uphold a necessary singularity, without committing to the view that there are necessarily existing quarks.

> necessity of its own nature. For the atheist, the universe could serve as a sort of God-substitute that exists necessarily. Now this would be a very radical step for the atheist to take, and I can't think of any contemporary atheist who has in fact adopted this line.[58]

This is entirely delusive, since the non-theist could, of course, accept that the universe is necessary – or at least that the universe is necessary if its existence has an explanation – without committing to the view that it is some sort of 'God-substitute', which is gratuitous. Craig's constant reference to – what he calls – atheists, what they think, and what they would be comfortable with, is unprofessional and betrays the polemical nature of his work. It would seem that if he were merely interested in the truth of his argument, rather than defending the God he personally believes in and defeating 'the atheists', he would instead refer to possible *objections* by *critics* of the argument.[59] These critics could, and do, include fellow Christians (professional philosophers and otherwise) and also non-believers who are not necessarily offended by notions of god/s or even the concept of theism. It was noted earlier that Craig's use of the term 'necessary' instead of the more transparent 'caused' might have some unacknowledged motive. His definition of necessary things "which exist of their own nature and so have no external cause of their existence" is partially tautological and only truly makes a substantive claim on causation.[60]

It seems that Craig would rather the critic be forced to claim the universe is 'necessary', which to Craig leads towards supernatural implications, rather than the mundane term, 'uncaused'.[61] The explanation-necessary-contingent discussion is a smokescreen; Craig is discussing causes. Furthermore, a 'God-substitute' universe would not, in fact, be problematic to certain pantheists who believe that god and the universe are one and the same. Craig will of course say that pantheists are not atheists, though that uses a very narrow definition of the latter

[58]Craig kindly gives some examples of what he considers a 'God-substitute' to be: "Gaia or the Force from *Star Wars*". Unfortunately, this is only one of his few *allusions* (he does not here mention the term 'pantheism') to pantheistic hypotheses. See Craig (OG), p. 60. Note also that Craig is alluding here that pantheism is offensive to atheists, while he elsewhere finds it offensive to theists. See William Lane Craig, "Pantheists in Spite of Themselves? Pannenberg, Clayton, and Shults on Divine Infinity," *American Theological Inquiry* 5, no. 1 (2012): 3–23. Clearly, any attempt to frame the debate as a dichotomy is fallacious; there is at the very least a third option.

[59]Craig is doubtless interested in proving the truth of his theistic theory. In that case, he ought to be making a fair comparison between theism and competing theories such as the various pantheisms. It seems somewhat a hollow victory to overcome naturalism, when there are still numerous supernaturalistic alternatives left to argue against. More on this in Part 3.

[60]Craig (RF), p. 107.

[61]Interestingly, Craig's considerations of both necessary and contingent universes both lead to supernatural implications, revealing his theological presuppositions. It seems that by Craig's reckoning, whether his God exists or not, the non-existence of a god is simply not possible. Either that, or Craig (unprofessionally) simply wishes to 'threaten' atheists with their having to embrace pantheism, in order to persuade them to simply accept his argument. However, pantheisms offer more plausible god-concepts, as is argued throughout this book, to say nothing of strong atheists probably preferring them. If Craig wishes to force atheists to accept either theism or some other god-conception, he perhaps should not be offering them a 'better' alternative to theism.

term, and at issue is whether his argument is sound, not whether he has highlighted problems for atheists. Fortunately, pointing to the supposed discomfort of atheists if they dare to defy Craig is not his only recourse. He invokes the equally spurious method of intuition:

> We have, one can safely say, a strong sense of the universe's contingency. A possible world in which no concrete objects exist certainly seems conceivable. We generally trust our modal intuitions on other familiar matters (for example, our sense that the planet earth exists contingently, not necessarily, even though we have no experience of its non-existence). If we are to do otherwise with respect to the universe's contingency, then the non-theist needs to provide some reason for his skepticism other than his desire to avoid theism.[62]

Craig is somehow overlooking that not everyone shares his intuitions, and it is precisely those that do not that Craig is supposed to convince. Already his dialectical opponents may wonder why their own intuitions about the universe's being necessary and/or eternal should be so easily dismissed. It also goes without saying that intuitions are not necessarily truth-conducive, perhaps especially with discussions of cosmology where quantum mechanics makes a mockery of the far more intuitive – to us – general relativity.[63] Seemingly overlooking the obvious conceivability of a God-less (and god-less) universe, Craig implies that the universe not existing is conceivable, and that this somehow makes its contingency more plausible. However, conceivability does not necessarily entail metaphysical possibility, and the assumption that it does has been recently criticised.[64] Herman Philipse does accept that contingent things exist, though he does so on the grounds of epistemic possibility (there may be no obvious logical contradiction), and the consistency in his approach allows him to suppose that causes are always contingent, as that is conceivable too.[65] Emanuel Rutten demurs on the latter point, as Craig might, since logical consistency does not entail metaphysical possibility, yet Philipse's supposition was based on the consistent approach he applied to the possibility of contingent things in the first place, which Rutten eagerly accepts without question, declaring it an "unproblematic

[62]Craig further argues that a stronger argument for the universe's contingency would be desirable, rather than mere intuition, and thinks he has good grounds for assuming such: his imagination. He constantly refers to the ease of conceiving the contingency of this universe and its components. However, Craig's conceived logical contingency does not necessarily entail metaphysical or ontological contingency. Also, Craig may be less eager to conceive of a contingent God, or necessary universes, tables and pens. Furthermore, his claim that as quarks are contingent, the universe must be also commits the composition fallacy and is doubly problematic if the universe is not a singular entity. See Craig (RF), pp. 109–110. It is worth noting that Craig fails to provide scholarly references here. Indeed, many philosophers reject the view that Craig defends. Anyone who thinks that there is a necessary initial singularity would reject what Craig claims here.

[63]For more on intuition, see Andrew Shtulman and Kelsey Harrington, "Tensions Between Science and Intuition Across the Lifespan," *Topics in Cognitive Science* 8, no. 1 (2016): 118–137.

[64]David Chalmers, "Does Conceivability Entail Metaphysical Possibility?," in *Conceivability and Possibility*, ed. Tamar Szabó Gendler and John O'Leary-Hawthorne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002).

[65]Among other possibilities, this could allow for a contingent God, or an infinite series of contingent causes. See Philipse (GAS), p. 223.

observational datum".[66] Also of note, though perhaps less relevant to the overall question of this universe's necessity, is the possibility that the universe not existing is actually inconceivable, as Bede Rundle explains:

> . . . our attempts at conceiving of total non-existence are irredeemably partial. We are always left with something, if only a setting from which we envisage everything having departed, a void which we confront and find empty, but something which it makes sense to speak of as having once been home to bodies, radiation, or whatever.[67]

As revealed in his quotation above, Craig also attempts to shift the burden of proof.[68] Despite the fact that he has made the argument, he feels no need to prove his assertions, based on assumptions alone, yet expects critics to prove the truth of their negations. Both of these attitudes are, of course, inappropriate. The onus is on Craig to prove his claim, which may entail disproving all other possibilities, including the various forms of determinism.[69] Of course, no one is *required* to get others to abandon their views in favour of those of the one. However, Craig is trying to do just that, so there are certain requirements that his arguments must meet; it is up to Craig to start from premises that those at whom the arguments are directed accept. If he fails to do this, then he is simply being otiose. Unfortunately, Craig makes no credible attempt to do so. This objection simply *had* to be raised. It is also overreaching for Craig to demand a justification for the critic's scepticism, when this should generally be a prerequisite in all academic investigations. Craig *necessarily* needs to argue with claims that his critics are willing to accept. Also noteworthy is that Craig assumes the universe was externally caused, which implies that the universe began to exist; yet he offers no good reason at this stage to suppose that that is the case. Positing an eternal universe would support its being uncaused and 'necessary'.

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[66]See Emanuel Rutten, "On Philipse's Attempt to Write Off All Deductive Cosmological Arguments," *Philo* 16, no. 1 (2013): 77–94.

[67]Bede Rundle, *Why There is Something Rather than Nothing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 110.

[68]Craig also attempted to shift the burden of proof earlier, when he accused those critics who do not accept that something non-physical exists apart from the universe, as "begging the question in favor of atheism". See Craig (RF), p. 108. My claims about Craig's assumed burden of proof and question-begging might be taken as invidious; a more nuanced approach may be to weigh numerous well-endorsed theories fairly. However, as an impartial observer, my interest in this research is not in proving or deeming more probable any alternative to Craig's theism (such as naturalism, or a supernaturalistic alternative), but in whether Craig has proven or demonstrated to be more probable, his brand of theism.

[69]Interestingly, Leibniz was a determinist. See Robert Merrihew Adams, *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

2.2.4 *Premise 2 – The Necessity of God, and What That Entails*

As Craig has not adequately refuted all other possible hypotheses, including an uncaused non-divine universe, an uncaused pantheistic universe, a self-caused universe, and a universe caused to come into being by a number, his argument amounts to the mere assumption of God's existence. As such, he has also effectively assumed God's being necessary 'and' uncaused.[70] His surprising claim that "As even the atheist recognises, it's impossible for God to have a cause" does nothing to prove that whatever may have caused the universe or what Craig calls God is indeed uncaused.[71] Putting aside the fact that the argument is at this point unsalvageable, it may be the case that a necessary god does not actually entail a contingent universe. Consider that the proposition, 'a necessary god exists' does not actually explain anything, let alone the existence of the universe. That some god created or caused the universe, better explains the universe's existence, than that that god exists. Once again, this reduces to a causal argument. And it is not at all obvious, at least at this stage, that the universe was indeed created or caused, or that it is not backwards eternal and indeed had a beginning.

Setting aside these important considerations, the philosopher may then speculate as to the explanation of God's creative act. Though Craig would prefer to see God's creative act as contingent, the unavoidable conclusion, given that the universe exists, is that God *must* have had the intention to create the universe.[72] In other words, the necessary God, necessarily had the intention to create, and by virtue of God's omnipotence, necessarily did create the universe. By this reasoning, the universe's existence can be said to be necessary. It simply could not have 'not existed'.[73] Craig might (counter-intuitively) object that this point is irrelevant. After all, his concept of necessity was actually tied in with causation, so that even this supposedly necessary universe is still caused, and thus, by Craig's reckoning, unnecessary.

However, in Craig's defence of (2), particularly in claiming that the universe is contingent, he constantly referred to the conceivability of the universe's not existing.[74] But in the scenario proposed by Craig, the universe *must* exist, even

[70]Craig gives us no reason to suppose that his terms 'necessary' and 'uncaused' are not effectively interchangeable.

[71]Craig (OG), p. 56.

[72]It is obvious for *Craig's* scenario, where the universe exists, and God is posited as its explanation. Generally speaking, it is not obvious that an existing god would have the intention to create anything (it could actually be argued that a perfect god would prefer not to create anything so as to preserve the perfect world), which affects the prior probability of theism as an explanatory hypothesis, and which shall be explained further in the discussions of Craig's *kalām* cosmological argument.

[73]This is not equivalent to the claim "if God exists, the universe must exist" or the claim "if God does not exist, the universe must exist". To clarify, the existence of a necessary, omnipotent, and immutable God, posited as the causal explanation for the universe's existence, entails that the universe is necessary, as it could not have failed to exist.

[74]It may be that Craig commits the ambiguity fallacy. When it is most convenient, he might refer to contingency only in terms of being caused, and in other cases, such as arguing for something's having been caused in the first place, in terms of possibly not existing.

apart from considering the evidence that it *does* exist. His god, the god of theism, is a creator, after all. To declare otherwise is effectively to deny that the existing god is God, and perhaps raises questions about this deity's omnipotence, which is undoubtedly what Craig would wish to avoid, and possibly is also to deny God's immutability. It is not only the conclusions of Craig's argument that ultimately indicates determinism and the necessity of all things. Apart from some limited – and ultimately inadequate – empirical support for determinism (via simple cause-and-effect observations),[75] that everything is necessary is also the natural consequence of Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason, a (softer) form of which underpins Craig's first premise (where it could be comfortably rejected by the non-theistic critic),[76] as is recognised by both theistic and non-theistic philosophers:

> Deploying the classical theist's assumption that the world is contingent – that it is only contingently true that there is a world – together with the principle of sufficient reason as stated we obtain the contradiction that it is necessarily true that there is a world. Here is why: suppose that x is the sufficient reason that explains there being a world contingently. Itself x is either contingent or necessary. If x is contingent, then according to the principle of sufficient reason there is another sufficient reason y explaining x ad infinitum. If, however, x is necessary, then x is a necessarily sufficient reason for there being a world. And if x is a necessarily sufficient reason for there being a world, then x cannot fail to be the reason for there being a world which is to say that there is a world of necessity.[77]

> Leibniz had a problem, for he had two horrors. He had a horror of BRUTE FACT, and he had a horror of UNIVERSAL NECESSITY. He wanted to deny the first without falling into the second. And so he ran into difficulty, for he *wanted desperately* to "square a circle". He wished for *sufficient* reasons for all *contingencies*, whereas *sufficient* reasons, by their natures, are not possible for *any* contingencies. He wished to ground all contingencies in necessities. But contingencies can be grounded, if at all, only in other contingencies, so that it is *impossible* to ground them all.[78]

> In the second place, a careful examination of the Principle shows that it has a consequence that most people would have a very hard time accepting: that all true propositions are necessarily true. In broad outline, the argument is this: if there are any contingent propositions (that is, contingently true propositions), then there is a set of all contingent propositions; but an explanation of any set of contingent propositions must appeal to some

[75]Proving causal determinism is seemingly impossible, even with classical mechanics, let alone quantum mechanics. Nevertheless, it is possible that the world is deterministic, even if it appears to be chaotic. Suppes notes that, "Deterministic metaphysicians can comfortably hold to their view knowing they cannot be empirically refuted, but so can indeterministic ones as well." See Patrick Suppes, "The Transcendental Character of Determinism," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 18(1993): 254. As discussed earlier, quantum-mechanical considerations could disconfirm determinism and a necessary universe to an extent, though it could also disconfirm the principle of sufficient reason so that Craig's argument is defeated at the first premise instead of at the second.

[76]Craig (RF), pp. 106–107.

[77]Benedikt Paul Göcke, "Panentheism and Classical Theism," *Sophia* 52, no. 1 (2013): 75.

[78]Jordan Howard Sobel, *Logic and Theism: Arguments for and against Beliefs in God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 231. Swinburne also agrees that, "you cannot deduce anything logically contingent from anything logically necessary", which highlights that clarity over the term 'necessary' is crucial. See Swinburne (EG), p. 79.

> contingent propositions outside that set; hence, the whole set of contingent propositions can have no explanation; hence, if every set of true propositions is such that there is an explanation for the fact that it contains only truths (as the Principle implies), there can be only necessary truths.[79]

This scenario then, which Craig must accept, renders Craig's contingency argument self-defeating, for two reasons. Firstly, the universe must exist, which negates the argument's underlying proposition that the universe did not have to exist. Interestingly, the universe may be necessary whether God exists or not, which would eliminate the need for God as an explanation. Secondly, if the universe had to exist, and can thus be called necessary (leading to a contradiction in Craig's use of the term), questions over the supposedly necessary God's external explanation or external cause can now reasonably be asked. This, and the possibility of an infinite regress, can only be avoided with a successful first cause argument, which is precisely what this argument is not intended to be. This scenario, which dictates that God necessarily had the intention to create the universe and seemingly entails that everything that happens thereafter is necessary, yields two further conclusions that Craig might find so disagreeable that he disowns his own argument.

The first is that God is not 'perfectly free'. God's *having* to create the universe is a clear infringement on its free will; the same could be said concerning God's ability – or rather, inability – to do stupid, irrational, or evil things.[80] Since God was earlier defined partly by the property of being 'perfectly free', if this argument is sound, it serves as a proof that God does not exist. The second uncomfortable conclusion is not as impactful as the first, but nonetheless interesting. If – as Spinoza thought – everything is necessary,[81] which is entailed by the scenario, and God lacks free will, it follows that human beings also lack free will.[82] It follows that the choices people make are illusory; they have only the perception of choice. Everything is already

[79]Peter van Inwagen, *Metaphysics*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2002), p. 119. Note that van Inwagen, Göcke, and the soon-referenced Morriston are also Christian philosophers, revealing that not all Craig's arguments are accepted by his immediate peers, and partially rendering moot his tendency to quote atheistic scholars as support for his premises, which supposedly aids the perception of objectivity.

[80]Cf. Wes Morriston, "Is God Free? Reply to Wierenga," *Faith and Philosophy* 23, no. 1 (2006): 93–98.

[81]Including such benign events as Craig grasping, and subsequently releasing, a pen.

[82]There is increasing evidence suggesting that free will is indeed illusory. See Chun Siong Soon et al., "Predicting Free Choices for Abstract Intentions," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 110, no. 15 (2013): 6217–6222. For an interesting treatment of free will, fatalism, and the importance of believing in free will, even if it is illusory, see Daniel C. Dennett, *Elbow Room: The Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984). There are also resources on free will and its probably being illusory from neuroscientists such as Sam Harris. For example, Sam Harris, *Free Will* (New York: Free Press, 2012).

determined, including the ultimate destination of their souls.[83] Given that Craig believes in God, in human free will,[84] and the importance of his research and outreach, it would seem that he ought to disregard his argument.[85]

2.2.5 *Bayesian Analysis*

Craig's contingency argument is a conceptual and deductive argument, or, at least, that is what it is supposed to be. In actuality, some allusion is made to the universe's supposed beginning, but no empirical evidence is provided. For this argument, it is difficult to determine the prior probabilities of Craig's theistic hypothesis, and especially with no evidence, the posterior priorities cannot reasonably be approximated. As such, a proper Bayesian analysis is almost impossible, and the argument can be judged a failure simply due to Craig's inability to conclusively rule out all alternative hypotheses. Interestingly, there are a number of factors that indicate that if a probabilistic analysis were possible, theism would make for a very poor hypothesis indeed. For one, Craig's theistic hypothesis relies on at least one thing existing apart from the universe, while many pantheistic hypotheses do not. So the state of the empirical evidence, namely that we are unaware of anything existing apart from the universe, claims of personal experiences concerning God notwithstanding, favours pantheism. Similarly, Craig's God is an 'unembodied mind' while there is no direct empirical support for the existence of any unembodied minds

[83]There is biblical support for the Christian doctrine of predeterminism. See Ephesians 1:3–6, Romans 8:28–30, Romans 9:16–21, Acts 13:48, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Revelation 13:8. This doctrine has been very important historically, likely aiding the development of capitalism (and thus also, religious pluralism), via Calvinist predestination. See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Stephen Kalberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[84]Adding complexity to the issue, confessional discussions about free will tend to involve defending against objections, and describing its nature. Even Christian philosophers of religion admit that there is little discussion of the evidence *for* free will, partly because there is none. For example, see William J. Wainwright, "Theistic Mystical Experiences, Enlightenment Experiences, and Ineffability," in *Philosophy and the Christian Worldview: Analysis, Assessment and Development*, ed. David Werther and Mark D. Linville (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 241–242. This is one of many instances where a theistic philosopher takes an unproven concept that is simply taken for granted, and builds upon it.

[85]Craig tends to stress the importance of human free will in his discussions on morality and in defending against the problem of evil. See William Lane Craig. "Freedom and the Ability to Choose Evil," accessed 22/11/2013, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/freedom-and-the-ability-to-choose-evil.

(or bodiless persons).[86] Indeed, if we factored this into the prior probabilities, we would realise that 100% of all (the at least 100 billion) minds that exist and have existed have been bodied, so that theism is incredibly disadvantaged from the outset. The same can be said for the claim that God is spaceless; all observed existing things do occupy spatial locations, including the universe.

Furthermore, Craig's assumption that the universe is not necessary may be disconfirmed to some extent by the available evidence. That the universe exists is at least some slight reason to suppose that it is necessary (h_1), rather than unnecessary (h_2), as the evidence, i.e., the universe's existence, fits perfectly with h_1 and would not be as expected for h_2.[87] Without any evidence of God's existence, it would seem premature to claim that God is necessary; God, as a concept, might even be seen as a contingent within and explained by the necessary universe. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, if the universe is contingent, that is better – even decisive – evidence for naturalism than for theism. As earlier explained, the existence of the universe is actually necessary on theism, but could be necessary or – perhaps brutely – contingent on naturalism. In other words, a contingent universe disproves, not merely renders less probable, the theistic hypothesis.

2.2.6 Conclusion

Craig's argument from contingency begs the question of the universe's contingency (and being externally caused), and effectively of God's necessity (and

[86]Craig might object that his further arguments do provide support for the existence of at least one unembodied mind. However, this is the first argument of his case, his other arguments are similarly unpersuasive to non-believers, and if persuasive, do not necessitate that the creator/designer/revelator in question is unembodied. Furthermore, any appeal to data on consciousness supporting the existence of unembodied minds would be merely speculative. In fact, consciousness has been linked to the natural and the physical (such as by neural correlates of consciousness), especially brains. See Christof Koch, *The Quest for Consciousness: A Neurobiological Approach* (Eaglewood, CO: Roberts & Company, 2004). Strictly speaking, the prior probability for such a notion should thus be near zero. This is not, as Craig may object, a display of atheistic favouritism. It is merely a reflection of the evidence that is currently available. Also, the prior probability can be said to be a very small, though unknowable number, meaning that a proper Bayesian analysis is not feasible, and would likely yield negative results even if it were. Note also that God, on account of her unimaginable power, and biblical precedent, should be able to provide direct empirical evidence of her existence, via physical manifestations, so that theoretically, the evidence could outweigh the very low prior probability, and would actually necessitate revising it.

[87]This criticism may be tenuous due to the anthropic principle, but it is still mathematically significant. Furthermore, as explained above, if God does not exist, the universe can be supposed as being necessary, in the sense of 'ontological necessity'. Also, the universe's existence is at least known, while God's existence is not, so it is far more reasonable to declare that the universe is necessary than to declare that God is necessary.

being uncaused), and of God's existence.[88] Taken to its natural conclusion, the argument is self-defeating as the universe is arguably found to be necessary after all, and like other necessary things, God's existence could also be explained by an external cause. The argument, if sound, could also counter-intuitively be used to support God's non-existence, as it likely contradicts the essential property of God's being perfectly free, and the universe's being contingent contradicts the universe's necessity if God exists. Furthermore, if all things are necessary, predeterminism – which appears antinomous to the concept of free will – would likely be true, indicating that Craig's apologetic efforts serve no practical purpose.[89] Given the ambiguity and lack of transparency over terms such as 'explanation' and 'necessary', and the numerous unjustified assumptions, it is safe to say that this argument is a total failure. Additionally, if a probabilistic analysis were possible, it is unambiguously clear that the available evidence points to the implausibility of Craig's theistic solution, relative to many non-theistic scenarios.

Not only is it unsuccessful in proving the existence of God, or even some necessary and external explanation or cause of the universe, the argument contributes nothing substantial to Craig's cumulative case. The necessity of God is later posited in Craig's ontological argument. Furthermore, I argued that Craig's contingency argument is actually an inferior version of his causal *kalām* cosmological argument, which is the second argument of his case, though it should have been the first. Indeed, Craig rarely invokes this argument in his debates, and surprisingly spends the bulk of his concluding remarks about the contingency argument, championing the conclusions of his as yet undiscussed *kalām* cosmological argument, and how they reinforce (1) and (2).[90] This could indicate that Craig himself subconsciously understands the inadequacies and and/or superfluousness of his argument from contingency.

2.3 The Kalām Cosmological Argument

The next argument in Craig's case is his celebrated *kalām* cosmological argument.[91] This is not a cosmological argument for the universe's 'necessary explanation' (as with the Leibnizian argument) or for the universe having a sustaining or synchronic cause for its continued existence (à la Thomas Aquinas), but rather, for a (first) cause of its beginning to exist. This diachronic cause of the universe's

[88]Merely claiming that 'atheists' would not feel comfortable with a necessary/uncaused universe is a poor justification indeed. Note that I generally use the phrase 'begging the question' in the broader sense of unjustified assumed explicit/implicit premises (which are, in fact, conclusions for lesser arguments), rather than the more specific sense of circular reasoning. Circular reasoning shall be indicated by the term, 'circular reasoning'.

[89]Though he could not help it.

[90]Craig (RF), p. 111.

[91]Ibid., pp. 111–156; Craig (OG), pp. 73–104.

existence is then argued to be God. Craig mentions in *On Guard*, that *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism* reports:

> A count of the articles in the philosophy journals shows that more articles have been published about Craig's defense of the Kalam argument than have been published about any other philosopher's contemporary formulation of an argument for God's existence... Theists and atheists alike 'cannot leave Craig's Kalam argument alone'.[92]

Interestingly, immediately preceding this quotation, the author, Quentin Smith, claims that many philosophers reject the argument, including many of Craig's fellow theistic philosophers of religion:

> This argument has attracted much more interest than agreement, even among theist philosophers of religion. The reason seems to be that many theists do not accept Craig's argument that the *past is necessarily finite* and therefore that the universe must begin to exist, and many theists are not as confident as Craig that the first premise is "obviously true," the first premise being "whatever begins to exist has a cause."[93]

After acknowledging the medieval Islamic roots of this first cause argument,[94] Craig formulates it thusly:

(1) Whatever begins to exist has a cause.
(2) The universe began to exist.
(3) Therefore, the universe has a cause.[95]

The conclusion is rather bland, though Craig does elaborate in both books, particularly in an argument map in *On Guard*, allowing the argument to be more fully expressed:

(4) This cause is God.
(5) Therefore, God exists.[96]

Though the argument seems simple, there are many points for discussion, such as the meaning of 'begins', the meaning of 'cause', the evidence for the universe's alleged beginning, and the justifications for why the supposed cause must be God, and why God can be said to be beginningless, and thus, uncaused.

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[92]Craig (OG), p. 71.

[93]Quentin Smith, "Kalam Cosmological Arguments for Atheism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism*, ed. Michael Martin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 183.

[94]Craig (RF), pp. 96–97. Craig discusses "the formulation of this argument by al-Ghāzalī (1058–1111)". It is worth noting that a similar argument was around earlier, as evidenced by the great 'Hindu' philosopher Udayana's *Nyayakusumanjali*.

[95]Ibid., p. 111.

[96]This has been altered for simplicity. The original text reads, "This cause is an uncaused, timeless, spaceless, immaterial, powerful Personal Creator". See Craig (OG), p. 104. In *Reasonable Faith*, Craig concludes his section on this argument by describing it as the "*kalām* cosmological argument for God as the Personal Creator of the universe". See Craig (RF), p. 156.

2.3.1 Premise 1 – Beginnings and Causes

It firstly must be understood that causation is not undoubtedly observed, but only postulated. Furthermore, causes, or correlations, are apparently observed in the universe, in time. Nothing is known about causality 'outside' of the universe, or 'outside' of time, or if this can be extrapolated to the universe itself. After all, the universe is generally taken to be the set of all existing things, and is thus not necessarily like one of those things.[97] Nevertheless, it seems intuitively obvious – and Craig's over-reliance on human intuition was raised earlier – that whatever begins to exist has a cause.[98] Ordinarily, many critics would be happy to accept this premise, so that the focus can switch to the more important second premise. However, in order to provide a more substantial objection, and to fully appreciate the impact of this seemingly benign and obvious premise, it becomes necessary to understand precisely what Craig means by terms such as 'begins' and 'cause'. Fortunately, he wastes no time in sharing what he thinks of the former.

Craig claims that (1) is "obviously true", as it is "rooted in the metaphysical intuition that something cannot come into being from nothing".[99] What is interesting at this stage is not Craig's intuitions, and in any other further justifications, but his tying in the notion of 'nothing' with his concept of a beginning. It is further known that Craig's cause of the universe's supposed beginning is a supernatural one, to wit, God, and that Craig upholds *creatio ex nihilo*, creation from nothing. So in the interests of philosophical curiosity, here is an altered version of Craig's first premise:

(1′) Whatever comes into being from nothing has a natural or supernatural cause.

What seemed at first to be an unobjectionable premise is now revealed to be riddled with problems, especially in light of Craig's justifications for it, which shall now be discussed. Craig declares, "First and foremost, it's rooted in the metaphysical intuition that something cannot come into being from nothing".[100] That sounds contradictory, relative to his views on *creation ex nihilo*, but he elaborates, "To suggest that things could just pop into being *uncaused* out of nothing is to quit doing serious metaphysics and to resort to magic" (emphasis mine).[101] Apart from the

[97]Craig seems inconsistent in that he overlooks that the universe is a special case, when it suits him. Cf. "For the universe is here defined as the whole of material reality." See William Lane Craig. "Causal Premiss of the Kalam Argument," accessed 06/12/2013, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/causal-premiss-of-the-kalam-argument.

[98]Whatever Craig means by 'begins' and 'causes', quantum mechanics allows for completely counter-intuitive possibilities, as explained in the previous section, so that the first premise can already be doubted. But what Craig means by these terms can be deduced and poses far more serious problems.

[99]Craig (RF), p. 111.

[100]Ibid., p. 111.

[101]Cf. "the empirical evidence overwhelmingly confirms the principle that things do not come into existence uncaused out of nothing". See William Lane Craig, "A Response to Grünbaum on Creation and Big Bang Cosmology," *Philosophia Naturalis* 31(1994): 237–249.

irony that appealing to things popping out of nothing *in general* may indeed be "resorting to magic", Craig asserts that this strange concept is plausible if there is a cause.[102] This seems to be special pleading and it is entirely unclear if "things coming in to being from nothing" is indeed "obviously true". Furthermore, as discussed earlier, human intuition, and indeed, Craig's personal intuition, is not necessarily truth-conducive. Fortunately, Craig has other justifications for his first premise:

> Second, if things really could come into being uncaused out of nothing, then it becomes inexplicable why just anything and everything do not come into existence uncaused from nothing.[103]

That things do not come into being from nothing, uncaused, is not logically incoherent, though it does lack empirical confirmation. It could be that things actually do come into being from nothing, uncaused, albeit unbeknownst to observers. For instance, this process may take place in other galaxies or universes, or at the quantum level. Nevertheless, on empirical grounds, Craig's point appears reasonable. It is not without its problems however, as observers also are unaware of things popping into being from nothing, due to some cause. Scientists are generally not cognizant of things coming into existence out of nothing, whether caused or uncaused, by natural or supernatural causes. That things coming into existence from nothing is not observed at all, leads into Craig's final – and highly contentious – point:

> Finally, the first premise is constantly confirmed in our experience. Atheists who are scientific naturalists thus have the strongest of motivations to accept it.[104]

This may be intuitively obvious, that is, with Craig's stated form of (1). The hopefully more transparent form supplied above, however, reveals quite a number of phenomena mentioned, which are not observed by scientists. No matter the cause, there is no empirical evidence at all that things come into being from nothing. In fact, there is no empirical evidence for the existence of 'nothing'. Physicists such as Lawrence Krauss may consider the appearance of matter arising out of 'nothing',[105] but this 'nothing' is filled with potentiality, and as Craig recognises, is not 'real nothing', which is just that, nothing.[106] Given that the 'existence' of nothing and

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[102]Hartshorne also saw the notion of God causing the world out of nothing to be "the phenomenon or supposed phenomenon of magic", noting that there is no evidential basis for it, and opining that such an important matter should not rely on "a semantic quicksand". See Charles Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1984), p. 58.

[103]Craig (RF), p. 111.

[104]Ibid., p. 111–112.

[105]Lawrence Maxwell Krauss, *A Universe from Nothing: Why There is Something Rather Than Nothing* (New York: Free Press, 2012).

[106]"Popular magazine articles touting such theories as getting "something from nothing" simply do not understand that the vacuum is not nothing but is a sea of fluctuating energy endowed with a rich structure and subject to physical laws. Such models do not therefore involve a true origination *ex nihilo*". See Craig (RF), p. 115.

notions of something coming from nothing are totally unknown to scientists, it does not follow that something's coming from nothing could not be uncaused.

Craig points, for example, to the intentionally ridiculous notion of a horse coming into existence (uncaused) from nothing.[107] Indeed, scientists do not observe such situations. This point works against Craig, however. Horses that appear, *caused*, from nothing, are similarly not observed.[108] It is Craig who is positing that things can come from nothing, and not the more sceptically inclined naturalists, so his example seems to harm his case more than it helps it. Craig's assertion that something's arising from nothing must be caused does not follow logically and is empirically unsupported; it is mere special pleading. It is odd that Craig would argue so adamantly that $a + b$ is ridiculous, when a is ridiculous in itself. Furthermore, it is known that the causes Craig considers include not only natural causes, but also supernatural causes. While the direct empirical evidence for natural causes is overwhelming, there is none for supernatural causes. In fact, there exists no validated empirical evidence for the existence of anything supernatural. An analogy demonstrating what sort of phenomena that *is* observed may prove helpful.

The thing in question is a loaf of bread. The bread, qua bread, began to exist. But this beginning can be said to be a 'quasi-beginning'. It is not a 'true beginning' in the Craigian sense. For to Craig, a true beginning involves coming into being out of nothing. However, the bread did not come into being out of nothing. Rather, the bread is the coming together of already-existing things, namely, flour, water, yeast, and salt. The 'beginning' of the bread is thus subject to the philosopher's perceptions. It began to exist in the sense that there was no bread beforehand, but it did not begin to exist in the sense that it arose from nothing, as the substance comprising the bread already existed. The bread did not pop into existence out of nothing. Instead of something arising out of nothing, this is a case of something changing into something. Furthermore, the bread's coming into existence can indeed be linked to a (transformative) cause. Plausibly, the bread was baked by a professional baker, or a house-husband. The bread was not brought into existence, as bread, by some immaterial being, or by some supernatural cause, but by a natural cause.

This is the sort of example that neutral empiricists observe. They do not observe things popping into existence out of nothing, by way of supernatural causation. While Craig asserts the rationality of his first premise and claims that things cannot come into existence without an efficient cause, based on our observations, critics can just as easily accuse Craig of 'cherry picking', and

[107] Ibid., p. 112. As discussed above, Craig uses a very similar example (p. 152) when it comes to countering critics who suppose that things, like horses, can come into being from nothing, naturally. Wondering why such naturally caused events are not observed, Craig may also wonder why such supernaturally caused events are similarly not observed. Furthermore, maybe other things do pop into being out of nothing, and Craig just cannot see them. They might be too small, outside the scope of human observations, not possible within *this* universe, and so on.

[108] Note also that we cannot equate a horse's coming into existence *in* time/the universe with the coming into existence of time/the universe.

claim that things cannot come into being without a material cause, and a natural efficient cause, based on our observations.[109] And if we were to be consistent in ignoring the available evidence, we could just as easily presume that the universe began to exist without a cause. Nevertheless, given the available evidence, a more empirically justified version of (1') would be:

(1″) Whatever comes into being from something has a natural cause.[110]

The argument would of course collapse, as the now reasonable first premise would be completely irrelevant to the unproven second premise, in its clearer form:

(2″) The universe came into being from nothing.

That Craig's argument appeals to ambiguity is not insignificant. Clearer and more empirically justifiable forms of his first premise reveal them to be untenable, or irrelevant. Even worse for the theist, they could lead to forms of pantheism. Nevertheless, attention shall now be paid to various objections Craig identifies and how he handles them. Recognising that a proposition's conceivability does not entail its being true, Craig argues that things coming into existence out of nothing uncaused, is unproven, overlooking the fact that his preferred proposition is also unproven. Despite lacking such proof, Craig admits that the "defender of the *kalām* argument is claiming that it is *really* impossible for something to come uncaused from nothing".[111] Offering no conclusive evidence for this strong assertion, Craig also asks, "if prior to the existence of the universe, there was absolutely nothing – no God, no space, no time – how could the universe possibly have come to exist?", which clearly begs the question.[112] Craig merely supposes that there was a 'prior' to

[109]Craig's approach is inconsistent. He appeals to the data to support aspects of the first premise that he finds favourable, but overlooks the overwhelming data that scuppers his argument. Namely, that all observed 'beginnings' involve material causes (i.e., not nothing), as well as efficient causes. This statement of his seems appropriate: "Should we just ignore the uniform data of experience in support of premiss (1) and behave as if it were just as likely as its opposite? Talk about being blind to the evidence!" See William Lane Craig. "Objections to the Causal Principle," accessed 13/12/2016, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/objections-to-the-causal-principle.

[110]Some may object to my altering Craig's premises, but this is done in the interests of clarity and/or to speculate on other possibilities when the premise has already been rejected. Craig does indeed reveal that there may be more nuance in his premises, such as when he says that his first premise "leaves it an open question whether that cause is efficient or material". See William Lane Craig. "Must Everything that Begins to Exist Have a Material Cause?," accessed 12/12/2016, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/must-everything-that-begins-to-exist-have-a-material-cause. However, while the 'efficient cause but no material cause' scenario suits him, the 'material cause but no efficient cause' scenario clearly does not.

[111]Craig (RF), pp. 112–113.

[112]Ibid., p. 113.

the existence of the universe, and also assumes that 'nothing' does or did exist.[113] He is also assuming, before commenting on (2), that the universe is not eternal. He further assumes that God is eternal, merging temporalist and atemporalist views that divide theists:

> I would argue that God exists timelessly without creation and in time subsequent to creation. This may be "mysterious" in the sense of "wonderful" or "awe-inspiring," but it is not, so far as I can see, unintelligible. . .[114]

Craig finds it easy to posit the mysterious existence of an unconfirmed entity that causes the universe, and to label it eternal or timeless, yet does not so easily imagine the universe, known to exist, as having the same properties.[115] He also raises the possibility of "undifferentiated time" or 'non-metric time' that inexplicably can only apply to God, pre-creation.[116] As is often the case for theistic arguments, we are presented with a word like 'time' that is ambiguous, that the theist will employ at different times with different meanings. It is entirely plausible that the universe is eternal, as agreed by several physicists, particularly those who – recognising that the

[113]It is not particularly clear, what Craig thinks 'nothing' is, if anything at all, and how something can come from nothing, even if it was caused by God. He describes nothingness as having "literally no properties at all, since there isn't anything to have any properties!" See Craig (OG), p. 76. Also, Craig never seems to explain why he favours *creatio ex nihilo*, which relies on such a tenuous concept, rather than the far more plausible *creatio ex deo*. He confuses the issue further, ultimately assuming creation out of nothing, yet also asserting that, "*ex nihilo nihil fit*", "out of nothing nothing comes", and that "If something has a cause, then it doesn't come from nothing". It seems Craig's concept of 'nothing' is under-developed. See William Lane Craig. "Causal Premiss of the Kalam Argument," accessed 06/12/2013, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/causal-premiss-of-the-kalam-argument; William Lane Craig, "Cosmos and Creator," *Origins & Design* 17, no. 2 (1996), http://www.arn.org/docs/odesign/od172/cosmos172.htm. The concept of 'nothing' can be difficult to comprehend and describe, and it could be that Craig does not think that the universe came from nothing. However, his constant railing against things coming into existence "uncaused out of nothing" rather than simply 'out of nothing' indicates that he does believe that things, like the universe, can come from nothing, as long as they are caused. This also seems clear from his other writings, where he makes clear distinctions – and I agree with him on this – between *creatio ex nihilo* and *creatio ex material/deo*. Craig upholds *creatio ex nihilo*. See Paul Copan and William Lane Craig, *Creation Out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical, and Scientific Exploration* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), pp. 13–14ff. This seemingly indicates that Craig is not merely arguing for an efficient cause, but some sort of material cause also. If all these concepts involve 'creation by God', they have to differ somehow, and it seems that they differ based on the origins of the material of the universe, i.e., God's 'substance', 'nothing', or some other material. Craig elsewhere rejects *creatio ex deo* and claims, "God is the efficient cause which produced the universe, and there was no material cause." See William Lane Craig. "Must the Universe Have a Material Cause?," accessed 12/12/2016, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/must-the-universe-have-a-material-cause. On some pantheistic models, the divine is also the material cause.

[114]Craig (RF), p. 113.

[115]Interestingly, the god of the Tanakh may not be eternal, depending on how Isaiah 43:10 is interpreted. That verse seemingly discusses a time 'before' and a time 'after' this god, which is more consistent with a polytheistic than a classical theistic view. That Yahweh, the Judeo-Christian god, was originally part of a polytheistic pantheon will be discussed in detail later.

[116]Craig (RF), p. 113.

classical laws of physics that predict the singularity actually break down the closer we get to it – doubt the existence of the singularity and the Big Bang as we know it.[117] If Craig wishes to stress that time came into being at the Big Bang, it is yet possible that there is a timeless *hypostasis* or substratum underlying the universe, which could be seen as a cause of the universe, or simply a different form of the universe.[118] This could be natural or 'supernatural', as in some versions of pantheism. Speculative to be sure, but no more than Craig's preferred hypothesis, which entails such fanciful notions as unembodied minds, and surely not "unintelligible". In fact, some speculative notions are inherently more probable than others, so that naturalistic speculations may be justifiably preferred.

Next, Craig criticises the common objection that "(1) is true only for things *in* the universe, but it is not true *of* the universe itself", which hints at a fallacy of composition.[119] He explains that this objection misconstrues (1), leaving no doubt that "(1) is not a physical principle" but "a metaphysical principle", as "something cannot come into existence uncaused from nothing".[120] As already noted, this revelation works against Craig's aims as nothing is ever observed as coming into existence from nothing, and as such, these hypothetical events are so far removed from the collective empirical knowledge, it cannot truly be known if such events could not occur without a cause or without an external cause.

Craig then briefly discusses the common objection, "what caused God?", noting it to be irrelevant to this particular argument.[121] It is a fair question to ask of relatively unsophisticated cosmological arguments, but Craig's *kalām* argument claims only that things that begin to exist have a cause. Granting this, as God is presumed to be eternal, without a beginning, it can be accepted that Craig is correct to assert that no cause is necessary.[122] Craig also correctly dismisses claims that particles originating as spontaneous fluctuations of the energy contained in a sub-atomic vacuum demonstrates that something can come uncaused out of nothing, as such a vacuum is not 'nothing' in the theological sense.[123] Unfortunately, Craig overlooks the most pressing objections to his first premise: true beginnings out of nothing have never

[117]For example, see Ahmed Farag Ali and Saurya Das, "Cosmology from quantum potential," *Physics Letters B* 741, no. 1 (2015): 276–279.

[118]Craig would agree that this substratum, whatever it is, is not nothing. He rightly declares, "if anything at all exists, however ethereal, it is something and therefore not nothing". See Craig (RF), p. 151.

[119]Ibid., p. 113–114.

[120]Ibid., p. 114.

[121]Ibid., p. 114.

[122]Technically, if eternity is not a separate temporal dimension, then it is not necessarily true that things in eternity exist uncaused.

[123]Craig (RF), p. 114–115. Craig here also asserts that "not all scientists agree that sub-atomic events are uncaused", which shows his acknowledgement that there are scientists who do think there are uncaused events. In support of his point, Craig then notes that there are many deterministic and non-deterministic interpretations of quantum mechanics (all naturalistic), which actually demonstrates greater uncertainty; something Craig ought to avoid.

been empirically observed, and a thing's beginning to exist *uncaused* out of nothing cannot be said to be logically impossible as opposed to a thing's beginning to exist *caused* out of nothing.

An interesting way of questioning the first premise, and also the second, is provided by Graham Oppy.[124] Mirroring Craig's *kalām* argument, Oppy replaces 'the universe' with 'causal reality', a felicitous term for naturalists to use. This is a logically valid argument, and as causal reality cannot have a cause of its existence, one of the premises must be wrong. If (2) is wrong, then causal reality could be said to be infinite, undermining the purpose of a first cause argument. The problem may also reside with (1) which is identical with Craig's first premise. It would seem that not everything that begins to exist must have a cause.[125] Oppy allows one escape for the theistic philosopher: alternative explanations of what 'begins to exist' means. While Craig's first premise is revealed to be problematic for multiple reasons, attention can now be turned to the controversy of the second premise. Craig presents two philosophical arguments for the universe's beginning, and two scientific arguments.

2.3.2 *Premise 2 – The Philosophical Case for the Universe's Beginning*

If the first premise is accepted, then the soundness of Craig's base argument relies on the second premise: the universe began to exist. As with all premises thus far, clarity is needed for all the key terms. It has already been established that Craig's concept of 'beginning' refers to an origination *ex nihilo*. The term 'universe' also needs clarification. The term could refer to the totality of reality. Herein lies a problem in that all of reality might not be adequately described as a singular entity, though this shall now be assumed for the purposes of discussion. As noted earlier, Craig prefers to view the universe as all of *physical* reality, which can seem arbitrary and question-begging, though he is free to define the term as he sees fit.[126] Key to this critique of Craig's arguments is my concept of an eternal pre-universal quantum vacuum or substratum as an explanatory hypothesis for the beginning of the current form of the observable universe.

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[124]He posits the following argument in *The Best Argument Against God*, and further explained his idea to me via email. See Graham Robert Oppy, *The Best Argument Against God* (Melbourne: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 26; Graham Oppy, personal communication, December 18, 2013. To clarify, if God exists, God belongs to 'causal reality' but not to 'natural reality'. According to many non-theists, however, causal reality just is natural reality.

[125]This conclusion also creates problems for Craig's contingency argument.

[126]Many questions arise. Does anything non-physical exist? Does anything physical exist? If a god exists, could it be said to be physical, as many pantheists and panentheists might assert? Could an existing god be a part of the universe, or even be the universe itself? Could a quantum vacuum or substratum out of which the universe originated be called the 'universe' too? Could this be a god?

This may be of more relevance to later discussions on what the theoretical cause of the universe might be, but is also relevant now as this 'pre-universal substance' might also have been the 'totality of reality' so that this too can be labelled, 'the universe'. Moreover, such a scenario entails that the universe did not begin to exist from nothing, so that it serves as a powerful counter-example to the second premise. This postulated substance might even be perceived as being nonphysical or immaterial, so that the dualistic material-immaterial distinction postulated by Craig is effectively revealed to be illusory. This hypothetical substratum might even be conscious or divine, revealing that Craig's appeal to an *external* and transcendent god as the first cause is unnecessary. Keeping these important considerations in mind, Craig's first philosophical argument for the universe's beginning can now be scrutinised:

(1) An actually infinite number of things cannot exist.
(2) A beginningless series of events in time entails an actually infinite number of things.
(3) Therefore, a beginningless series of events in time cannot exist.[127]

Craig begins by explaining the difference between an actual infinite, and a potential infinite, which is left untouched by this argument.[128] While seemingly acknowledging that there is nothing logically incoherent about the concept of an actual infinite, Craig reveals his tactics: intuition and paradoxes.

> One may consistently hold that while the actual infinite is a fruitful and consistent concept within the postulated universe of discourse, it cannot be transposed into the real world, for this would involve counter-intuitive absurdities.[129]

As the existence of actual infinites would likely be impossible to prove empirically, it is right of Craig not to demand proof of it from more sceptical scholars. In this instance, he correctly bears the burden of proof and attempts to *disprove* actual infinites. Craig implies that he will be presenting a "case against the real existence of the actual infinite".[130] Unfortunately, Craig relies on false analogies. Craig's *reductio ad absurdum* strategy makes use of German mathematician David Hilbert's paradox of the Grand Hotel, wherein a hotel with infinitely many rooms is fully occupied by infinitely many guests. He points to the many oddities that arise as a result of various simple manipulations. For example, Craig entertains the notion that a new guest can be accommodated by moving all guests into the next room, so that the first room is free, even though "all the rooms were already occupied!"[131] Craig

[127] Craig (RF), p. 116. Cf. William Lane Craig, *Philosophy of Religion: A Reader and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), pp. 92–113.

[128] Craig (RF), pp. 116–117.

[129] Ibid., p. 117. Note that many powerful and admirable ideas have been 'counter-intuitive' and/or 'absurd', compassion for one. Another could be Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection. See Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (London: Ward Lock & Co., 1911).

[130] Craig (RF), p. 120.

[131] Ibid., p. 118.

then considers the absurdities that result by vacating (subtracting) all the odd or even rooms, or all the rooms after some finite amount, concluding:

> In both cases we subtracted the *identical number* of guests from the *identical number* of guests and yet did not arrive at an identical result. In fact one can subtract equal quantities from equal quantities and get any quantity between zero and infinity as the remainder. Can anyone believe that such a hotel could exist in reality? Hilbert's Hotel is absurd.[132]

After this amusing thought experiment, Craig confidently asserts that "it logically follows that if such a hotel is impossible, then so is the real existence of an actual infinite", leading to his temporal finitism.[133] There are a number of problems with such examples, apart from the fact that the hotel may not actually be so 'absurd'.[134] For one, I suspect that there is a problem of new guests being contrasted with accommodated guests. These are arguably not the same types of things, given that the hotel initially accommodated infinite, and thus all, 'accommodated guests'. In other words, I am inclined to consider the 'accommodated guest' as being part of a room, with the room already seemingly defined as 'full', so that it is not coherent to say that the room could be made vacant. In other words, the accommodated guests cannot be moved up into the vacant room, as there was no vacant room. This leads into the related problem, that the hotel was not in fact 'fully booked' if new guests are indeed comparable with accommodated guests. Admittedly, I may just be failing to imagine what Craig is asking me too, although that potentially limns a bigger problem with such analogies. They are false analogies in that they have no relation to the actual world. Rather than declare the concept of infinity to be absurd, Craig should wonder if his analogies are absurd. We do not experience hotels with infinitely many rooms and infinitely many guests, so can be forgiven if we are forced to agree with Craig that something about the scenario is indeed absurd. The whole scenario, the analogy itself, is absurd. Coherent or not, even proving that a hotel cannot have infinitely many rooms does nothing to prove that infinities cannot exist in reality, or that time cannot be eternal (while God can somehow be).

Philipse effectively agrees, noting that such examples appear problematic as they encourage the scholar to conceive "of infinite sets on the model of finite sets".[135] Such hotels do not exist on Earth, so that this scenario does seem absurd. Furthermore, that counter-intuitive and absurd results may result from such thought experiments does nothing to demonstrate the impossibility of actual infinites;[136] quantum physics surely alerts scholars to the dangers of appealing to intuition and what can be conceived.[137]

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[132]Ibid., p. 119.

[133]Ibid., p. 119. Cf. Craig (PR), p. 96.

[134]Václav Potoček et al., "Quantum Hilbert Hotel," *Physical Review Letters* 115, no. 16 (2015): doi:10.1103/PhysRevLett.115.160505. See also James East, "Infinity Minus Infinity," *Faith and Philosophy* 30, no. 4 (2013): 429–433.

[135]Philipse (GAS), p. 224.

[136]Sobel (LT), p. 187.

[137]Newtonian physics is very useful, but is very often an approximation. It can become very inaccurate at the quantum level. An example of subverted intuitions would be the discovery that the atom is mostly empty space and does not have a rigid structure.

There is a further issue with the thought experiment potentially highlighting a clash between two, or even three infinite sets, which shall be discussed shortly. Rather than disputing over the details of this paradoxical example, especially as its absurdity may have led to my interpretation being confused and/or incoherent, the simplest tactic to eliminating the force of the example is to note its irrelevance to the greater issue of whether actual infinites are impossible.

With this approach, Graham Oppy's embracing of the absurdities that result is more ingenious than Craig thinks.[138] Craig's only objection to this strategy of acceptance is that any absurd conclusion could be legitimised, while failing to see how absurd others could view his ad hoc hypotheses.[139] Intuitions are not necessarily truth-conducive (consider the Monty Hall problem that had many mathematicians making fools of themselves),[140] and the 'problems' arising from this kind of example do not necessarily apply to actual infinites in general. With such analogies as his only support for the proposition 'actual infinities cannot exist' Craig commits the fallacy of composition.[141] There are numerous reasons as to why this example cannot be taken as representative of actual infinities as a whole. Firstly, Craig's example involves tangible physical objects; it says nothing of the possibility of infinite time. It is unclear how the absurdities in this paradox affect the possibility of infinites concerning time, the universe as a whole, the quantum vacuum, the hypothetical universal substratum, or even God.

Secondly, the paradox may involve a conflict between two – very different – sets of infinities: the infinitely many rooms of the hotel and the infinitely many 'accommodated guests'. Arguably, a third potential set is introduced, that of 'new guests'. However, the possible eternality of the universe need not rely on more than one infinite set. The infinite hotel itself, sans guests, poses no prob-

[138]"In many cases, these agedly absurd situations are just what one would ought to expect if there were large and small denumerable, physical infinities". Indeed, this example merely demonstrates that infinites are counter-intuitive, not logically impossible. See Graham Robert Oppy, *Philosophical Perspectives on Infinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 48. Note also that zero minus zero (as well as multiplications with and divisions from zero) is or can be as absurd as some of the results Craig produces by subtracting from infinity, and yet he does not attempt to argue that zero or 'nothing' therefore cannot exist.

[139]Craig (RF), p. 119.

[140]For a discussion of the notorious problem concerning doors and goats, Marilyn vos Savant's solutions to it, and several disgraceful – and erroneous – comments by professional mathematicians about vos Savant's solutions, see Jason Rosenhouse, *The Monty Hall Problem: The Remarkable Story of Math's Most Contentious Brain Teaser* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Rosenhouse does not name names, but the identities are easily discovered via quick online searches. Given the respective genders of vos Savant and her critics, it is hard not to perceive that misogyny played a role in the undue criticisms and 'mansplaining'. The correct answer, by the way, is to 'switch', on account of new information received. Interestingly, Rosenhouse, a professor of mathematics, invokes Bayesian reasoning throughout.

[141]Craig also commits the related fallacy of division when he insinuates that a world in which actual infinities were possible would be "populated with oddities like Hilbert's Hotel". See Craig (RF), pp. 119–120.

lems. Thirdly, Craig's analogy involves subtraction and other physical manipulations, which is inappropriate to temporal matters, particularly if the B-Theory of time or some other form of eternalism is correct.[142] It would need to be demonstrated that time/space-time is not continuous, that is comprised of discrete chunks, partly to avoid issues like a finite path having an infinite number of points to traverse, as in Zeno's paradoxes. This also is inappropriate given Craig's presentism, which entails that past and present time-slices do not exist.[143] Surely Craig does not suppose that he could subtract every other war from history, or change the order of the former presidents of the United States of America, or add a third term for George W. Bush. Craig recently proposed an example involving coins rather than the infinite rooms of a hotel, avoiding some of the potential conflict between different infinite sets, yet this analogy still has Craig alluding to the absurdities that result when physically subtracting from infinity.[144]

It is unclear why such examples should indicate that infinite events in time are impossible, unless Craig surprisingly would suggest that all the even (or odd) events in time could be subtracted; seemingly impossible on Craig's tensed (non-eternalist) view of time, wherein past events no longer exist, as shall be revealed shortly. Whether it is rooms or coins being discussed, the examples seem to assume that all these concrete objects exist simultaneously. That is not the case with events in time, if Craig's presentism is upheld, wherein the only existing 'event' is the present one.[145] That Craig resorts to false analogies, however, may not be his most grievous error.[146] That would be the special pleading, and ambiguity over the term 'infinite', and the related term, 'eternal'. Craig is aware that critics may ask how God can be considered to be infinite or eternal, if he is right, and actual infinities do not exist. His response is telling:

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[142]On such views, time is not some thing to be dissected and analysed, time just is; or rather, time is not. Contrast this with tensed views of time, such as the A-Theory.

[143]He makes his adherence to this view clear in William Lane Craig, *Time and Eternity: Exploring God's Relationship to Time* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001).

[144]William Lane Craig. "Is the Material World all there is? Arguments for the Existence of God," accessed 06/12/2013, http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2013/08/06/3819108.htm.

[145]Craig could say that past events *did* exist, but it does not follow that things that did exist (past events) or will exist (future events) can be subtracted or added to the only temporal thing that does exist (present event). If Craig's presentism or A-theory (discussed shortly) is to be rejected, and some form of eternalism is true, then all events and things do exist simultaneously, though there would be no clear sequential order, so that the universe could not have had a beginning. Everything would be eternal and Craig's overall argument is defeated. That Craig does not find that his 'problems' with infinite events in time should lead him away from presentist views perhaps reveals his theological presuppositions.

[146]Wes Morriston also recognises that "it does not immediately follow that infinite sets *in general* are impossible". See Wes Morriston, "Craig on the Actual Infinite," *Religious Studies* 38, no. 2 (2002): 148. Morriston is not the only Christian philosopher who disagrees with Craig about the *kalām* argument. See also Calum Miller's and Danny Faulkner's critiques.

> The question is based on a misunderstanding. When we speak of the infinity of God, we are not using the word in a mathematical sense to refer to an aggregate of an infinite number of finite parts. God's infinity is, if you will, qualitative, not quantitative. It means that God is metaphysically necessary, morally perfect, omnipotent, omniscient, eternal, etc.[147]

Missing from Craig's commentary is an explanation of why the universe, the singularity, or its hypothesised substratum, cannot also be qualitatively infinite. Without this clarification, it is easy to conclude that Craig believes in the very thing he attempts to disprove.[148] Also missing is an explanation of why the universe, the singularity, or its hypothesised substratum, cannot also be eternal. An eternal universe, akin to an eternal God, need not have had a beginning. After barely commenting on his second premise, in which Craig casually claims that events in time are 'things', he concludes that, "the universe therefore began to exist".[149] It is left unexplained, why his earlier concept of 'undifferentiated time' cannot apply to the universe, the singularity, or a hypothesised substratum, but can indeed apply to God, prior to the creation.[150] Craig then moves on to his second philosophical argument for the universe's beginning:

(1) The series of events in time is a collection formed by adding one member after another.
(2) A collection formed by adding one member after another cannot be actually infinite.
(3) Therefore, the series of events in time cannot be actually infinite.[151]

This argument is more robust than the first in the sense that it does not rely on Craig's unsuccessful attempt at disproving the existence of actual infinites. However, the justifications for the first premise of this argument are about as unconvincing as those for the first premise of the previous argument. After initially claiming that the first premise seems "rather obvious" Craig acknowledges that it is "in fact, a matter of great controversy".[152] With no attempt to justify his treating events in time as 'things' or 'members', Craig briefly discusses the threat of the B-Theory of time,

[147] Craig (RF), p. 119.

[148] Note that Craig had earlier admitted that infinites are logically possible, which was noted by Oppy. Craig's response was to highlight that this is not the same as admitting that infinites are ontologically possible. Craig's stressing of this and his further comments seem particularly inappropriate, given his support for Plantinga's ontological argument, which is discussed in §2.6. Concerning the latter argument, Craig demands that critics prove that God's existence is impossible, so he should expect that critics would similarly demand that he proves that infinites are impossible. See William Lane Craig, "Graham Oppy on the kalām cosmological argument," *Sophia* 32, no. 1 (1993): 1–11. Craig here also effectively admits that it is possible that things can begin to exist uncaused, but opposes such appeals to mere possibility. Craig actually appeals to mere possibility very frequently, as shall be discussed throughout. Incidentally, the sceptical agnostic is more justified in appealing to possibility than the proselytising and cocksure theist.

[149] Craig (RF), p. 120.

[150] Ibid., p. 113.

[151] Ibid., p. 120.

[152] Ibid., p. 121.

which would render the first premise, and thus the argument, "false, for the past, like the future, exists tenselessly and there is no question of the series of events' being formed sequentially".[153] Indeed, the truth of the B-Theory of time, or of some other form of eternalism, would seem to immediately put an end to the *kalām* cosmological argument, as the universe could never be said to have had a beginning proper. Arguably, the argument still works given the B-Theory of time, though it is undeniable that the thrust of the argument would suffer, as even Craig commendably acknowledges:

> From start to finish, the *kalam* cosmological argument is predicated upon the A-Theory of time. On a B-Theory of time, the universe does not in fact come into being or become actual at the Big Bang; it just exists tenselessly as a four-dimensional space-time block that is finitely extended in the *earlier than* direction. If time is tenseless, then the universe never really comes into being, and, therefore, the quest for a cause of its coming into being is misconceived. Although G. W. F. Leibniz's question, *Why is there* (tenselessly) *something rather than nothing?*, should still rightly be asked, there would be no reason to look for a cause of the universe's beginning to exist, since on tenseless theories of time the universe did not begin to exist in virtue of its having a first event anymore than a meter stick begins to exist in virtue of having a first centimeter.[154]

According to the B-Theory of time (and other tenseless or eternalist views of time), Craig explains, "all events in time are equally real, and temporal becoming is an illusion of human consciousness".[155] In other words, the universe is eternal, and only had a 'pseudo-beginning'. His cosmological argument could technically still be correct, but Craig's intention to demonstrate that the universe had an absolute beginning from nothing is undermined. By his own reckoning, such views of time thus pose a significant threat to Craig's cumulative case for God's existence. If the B-Theory or some other tenseless view of time is correct, this philosophical argument, and Craig's greater *kalām* cosmological argument, fails. If that argument fails, further arguments become untenable (such as the teleological and axiological arguments), and in any case, God, earlier defined as the Creator of the universe, does not exist. It would reasonably be expected then, that Craig make a thorough and concerted effort to argue for the impossibility of the B-Theory of time and other eternalist theories.[156] Unfortunately, contrasted with the

[153]The B-Theory's being true would also nullify Craig's first philosophical argument for the universe's beginning.

[154]William Lane Craig and James D. Sinclair, "The Kalam Cosmological Argument," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 183–184.

[155]Craig (RF), p. 121.

[156]The same could be said for this project, that a thorough defense of the B-Theory would be expected. That does not follow, as this project is concerned with Craig's overall case, and if theists are correct, and I am further doubtful that this problem will ever be solved, just as the issue of determinism may never be resolved.

approximately 26-page exposition devoted to his desire for meaning, value and purpose,[157] Craig offers but a single paragraph, containing nothing even remotely close to being a convincing argument:

> The question, then, is which of these two competing theories of time is true? Unfortunately, an adjudication of this issue here would take us too far afield. Everyone agrees that the commonsense view is that the difference between, past, present, and future is real and objective, and as a result of over a decade of intensive research on this question my studied opinion is that there is no reason to abandon the commonsense view of this matter. Therefore, I am convinced the A-Theory of time is correct and, accordingly, that premise (1) is true. Given that the vast majority of people share this conviction, I think that an argument based upon this premise will provoke little objection on this score.[158]

This brief and dismissive paragraph, peppered with surprising appeals to the majority (not a single reference is made to other temporal experts),[159] to intuition, and to his high opinion of his own theologically-motivated research,[160] is accompanied by a single footnote declaring that he had already defended the A-Theory in *Time and Eternity*, written seven years prior (2001) to the current edition of *Reasonable Faith*. While a thorough critique of the former would not herein be appropriate, it was decided that a cursory glance might prove useful, so as to avoid mere gainsaying. Rather than an objective analysis of fundamental temporal phenomena, the book was found to be speculative, theologically motivated, and theologically reliant. The sub-title, *Exploring God's Relationship to Time*, is telling, with the book serving more as a defence of views compatible with theism. Craig's chapter on the A-Theory or dynamic conception of time was found to be highly speculative, making much use of human intuition and perception.[161] Craig begins his chapter on the B-Theory or static conception of time in this way:

> Although it may seem foreign to the common man, the static understanding of time is accepted almost unquestioningly by many physicists and a good many reflective philosophers as well.[162]

This stands in direct contradiction with his allusions in *Reasonable Faith*, that 'everyone agrees' with Craig's position. Craig's theological motivations and reliance on theological assumptions, such as the existence of God and the reliability of the Bible, is evident throughout, demonstrated through quotations such as, "the theistic perspective from which we approach these questions",[163] "then a Lorentzian

[157]This is the chapter entitled "The Absurdity of Life without God", which – as the title implies – is largely an *argumentum ad consequentiam/baculum*. See Craig (RF), pp. 65–90.

[158]Ibid., p. 121.

[159]Recall that Craig earlier acknowledged that this is "a matter of great controversy".

[160]Craig doubtless realises the importance of the A-Theory of time to his case for God's existence and would surely be aware of the implications of the B-Theory on free will. Furthermore, the book soon referenced is theologically motivated, as shall be demonstrated.

[161]Craig (TE), pp. 115–163.

[162]Ibid., p. 167.

[163]Ibid., p. 178.

theory of relativity *must* be true, since the frame coinciding with God's "now" will be privileged",[164] and "obviously a timeless God would not have a temporally ordered series of perceptions... This counter-example undermines Mellor's whole account".[165] Craig dismisses another disagreeable notion, as it is "incompatible with the biblical writers' conception of *creatio ex nihilo*, of God's existing alone and bringing the world into being out of nothing".[166] Craig further finds the B-Theory of time unfavourable, as "the idea that God and Creation tenselessly co-exist seems to negate God's triumph over evil", "Christ hangs permanently on the cross", "the dreadful events of A.D. 30 never fade away or transpire", and "death is never really done away with", which he notes contradicts 1 Corinthians 15:54, which claims that 'Death is swallowed up in victory!'[167] Craig concludes:

> The static time theorist cannot affirm that the world came into being at the first moment of its existence and therefore cannot affirm that God created the world in the full sense of the word "create". It seems to me, therefore, that a static conception of time is theologically unacceptable. A robust doctrine of creation requires a dynamic theory of time... it [B-Theory of time] emasculates the biblical doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*... Weighing the arguments for and against the dynamic or static conception of time respectively, we seem to have good grounds for believing what people have intuitively always believed: that time is tensed and temporal becoming is real. The dynamic conception of time is correct.[168]

There seems to be some circularity in Craig's argument. His key argument for his creator God's existence relies on his assuming the A-Theory of time. His opinions on the A-Theory of time, however, are largely shaped by the presupposition that his Christian God exists. This is akin to claiming that the biblical claims about God's existence are truthful, because God wrote the Bible, and it is thus infallible. Craig's undeniably theological motivations stand in contradistinction to Oppy's far more neutral 'mere acceptance' of what may be, however odd, and casts additional doubt on his speculations about intuitive notions. It is, admittedly, difficult to argue that the B-Theory of time is logically incoherent, which may partially explain its popularity. It is known, for example, that the visible spectrum of humans is limited. The human eye perceives wavelengths of electromagnetic radiation from about 390nm-700nm. By contrast, many birds can visually perceive wavelengths as small as 300nm, allowing them to see ultraviolet light. Similarly, the colour perception of dogs is not as impressive as that of humans.

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[164] Ibid., p. 179. Several philosophers of science disagree: "We contend that his reconstruction of Lorentz's theory and its historical development is fatally flawed and that his arguments for reviving this theory fail on many counts." See Yuri Balashov and Michel Janssen, "Presentism and Relativity," *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 54, no. 2 (2003): 327–346.

[165] Craig (TE), p. 196.

[166] Ibid., p. 214. That the opening verses of Genesis refer to *creatio ex nihilo* is highly contentious, and not all Christians accept the doctrine.

[167] Ibid., p. 214.

[168] Ibid., pp. 214–215.

The example of 'Dressgate' should also serve as a reminder that even amongst individuals of the same species, various perceptions are possible.[169] Indeed, concerning Dressgate, the majority of people shown the offending photograph perceived the dress' colours 'wrongly', enabling the critic of experiential claims to wonder why a majority of religious claimants regarding Yahwistic experiences, for example, should be believed, let alone a minority of them. Just as the curious philosopher's visual perception is limited, it could also be the case that her temporal perception is also limited, so that time is only perceived as being tensed, sequential and monodirectional.[170] Ideas such as that time is tenseless or that there may exist advanced – perhaps extra-terrestrial – species that perceive time differently are not logically incoherent. Indeed, in the Kantian fashion, the noumenal world (reality) may be vastly different to the phenomenal world (how reality is perceived), which might be ever enigmatic to humanity. In fact, research does already exist that suggests that other species on Earth do perceive time differently.[171]

Arguing for the B-Theory of time may be fruitless and is far beyond the ambit of this project, but enough is said here to establish that Craig has not adequately demonstrated the truth of his presentist A-Theory or the logical incoherency of the B-Theory or alternative eternalist views.[172] Furthermore, Craig's assertion that "the vast majority of people" agree with his views on time is not only unjustified, but also plainly wrong, at least when the opinions of professional philosophers are considered. The 2009 *PhilPapers* survey, which attempted to gauge the views of professional philosophers and associated scholars, revealed that 21.9% of those surveyed agreed with or leaned towards the B-Theory of time, with only 15.4% accepting or leaning towards the A-Theory, perhaps affected by the special theory of relativity. The remainder – more than half – held alternative views on time.[173] Even with the results limited to responses by those considering themselves specialists in Philosophy of Religion, a field typically dominated by theists, the vast majority, 67.2%, did not accept or lean towards the A-Theory of time; a 'matter of great controversy'

[169]'Dressgate' is a popular term for the controversy surrounding a photograph of a dress that went viral on the internet in 2015. Many observers disagreed over the colours of the dress. For more information about Dressgate, including links to a poll and a scientific explanation, see Susannah Guthrie. "#DressGate: what colours do you see?," accessed 02/02/2015, http://thenewdaily.com.au/life/2015/02/27/colour-dress. Numerous other articles and associated comments reveal that the issue has caused arguments and that some (fundamentalist?) people refuse to acknowledge the 'actual' colours.

[170]A footnote to Plato: Cf. the Analogies of the Sun, the Divided Line, and the Cave.

[171]Kevin Healy et al., "Metabolic rate and body size are linked with perception of temporal information," *Animal Behaviour* 86, no. 4 (2013): 685–696.

[172]For one example of an argument against presentism, see Gustavo E. Romero, "On the Ontology of Spacetime: Substantivalism, Relationism, Eternalism, and Emergence," *Foundations of Science*, no. doi:10.1007/s10699-015-9476-1 (2015).

[173]PhilPapers. "The PhilPapers Surveys - All Respondents," accessed 30/11/2013, http://philpapers.org/surveys/results.pl?affil=All+respondents&areas0=0&areas_max=1&grain=coarse.

indeed.[174] That Craig would face opposition from like-minded peers is not unprecedented. His colleague Richard Swinburne disagrees with deductive cosmological arguments in general, and rightly acknowledges that, "We do not know whether the universe has a finite or an infinite age".[175]

A thorough treatment of Craig's second (and also first) premise is unnecessary, though there are a number of points of contention (such as supposing that time can be divided and that the resulting events or time-slices are comparable to real, tangible things),[176] as it too relies on Craig's presumption of the truth of the A-Theory of time.[177] As earlier discussed, Craig failed to provide any convincing arguments for the A-Theory, he failed to demonstrate the logical incoherency of the tenseless alternatives, and despite his claims, many of his peers favour the B-Theory or alternative conceptions of time. The biggest problem with both of Craig's philosophical arguments for the universe's beginning, however, is that they amount to *ignorationes elenchi*. Perhaps in the way that Craig describes, the universe cannot be 'infinitely old' or 'eternal', but it may be 'infinite' and 'eternal' in the same way that God is said to be.[178] To claim otherwise seems to be special pleading. And if Craig were to successfully dispute this, there is still no coherent reason to deny the quantum vacuum or my hypothetical universal substratum as having such properties. Craig might point to the speculative nature of such theories, but they are no more speculative than his God hypothesis, and are actually better supported by empirical observations.[179] Recall also Craig's acknowledging of inscrutable priors, so that speculative naturalistic and supernaturalistic hypotheses are acceptable on his view. The focus shall now turn to Craig's scientific arguments for the universe's beginning.[180]

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[174]PhilPapers. "The PhilPapers Surveys - Philosophy of Religion," accessed 30/11/2013, http://philpapers.org/surveys/results.pl?affil=All+respondents&areas0=22&areas_max=1&grain=coarse.

[175]Swinburne (EG), p. 138.

[176]J. Ellis McTaggart, "The Unreality of Time," *Mind* 17, no. 68 (1908): 457–474. Again, the possibility of Craig's 'undifferentiated time' or 'metaphysical time', which somehow only applies to God, is pertinent.

[177]This argument may also be subject to a problem faced by the first: conceiving of an infinite set on the model of a finite set. Adding, subtracting, and 'traversing' (as in 'traversing the infinite') are typically understood to being applicable to finite quantities and distances.

[178]For instance, that the universe, or hypothesised substratum, or singularity, is infinitely old according to 'metaphysical time', just as God may be.

[179]My preferred substratum hypothesis is not without precedent. There is Aristotle's philosophical concept of the substratum, religious (typically pantheistic) models where this pre-universal substance may be a panentheistic or pandeistic god, and the scientific notion of the quantum vacuum. For a cosmological hypothesis wherein the universe originates from a quantum vacuum fluctuation, see Edward P. Tryon, "Is the Universe a Vacuum Fluctuation?," *Nature* 246, no. 5433 (1973): 396–397.

[180]Craig's colleague J. P. Moreland has offered several similar arguments in support of (2). For a critique of some of these arguments, see Felipe Leon, "Moreland on the Impossibility of Traversing the Infinite: A Critique," *Philo* 14, no. 1 (2011): 32–42. One of the major criticisms is that Moreland effectively assumes that which he is supposed to prove.

2.3.3 *Premise 2 – The Scientific Case for the Universe's Beginning*

In painstaking detail (approximately 26 pages of *Reasonable Faith*), Craig presents two scientific arguments for the universe's beginning. It may be ironic then, that this critique of those arguments will be relatively short. First of all, cosmological theories – whether naturalistic or supernaturalistic – are exceedingly speculative and, with little to no verified background knowledge available, it is unlikely that the demonstrable likelihood of any one theory would be greater than 0.5.[181] Secondly, like his philosophical arguments, Craig's scientific arguments for the universe's beginning amount to *ignorationes elenchi*. The best Craig can hope for is a scientific cosmological theory for a pseudo-beginning of the universe, in that the underlying stuff likely already existed in some form; none of the theories he discusses involves a 'true beginning from nothing' as Craig understands it.

His first, specious, argument concerns the expansion of the universe. After briefly mentioning the important historical events that led physicists to conclude that the universe is expanding, Craig puts forth his favoured scientific hypothesis, the Standard Model, as his explanation for the universe's expanding.[182] He does well in describing the standard Big Bang model, and even accepts propositions that contradicts his first philosophical argument for the universe's beginning:

> This has the astonishing implication that as one reverses the expansion and extrapolates back in time, the universe becomes progressively denser until one arrives at a state of infinite density at some point in the finite past. This state represents a singularity at which spacetime curvature, along with temperature, pressure, and density, becomes infinite.[183]

Despite earlier formulating an entire argument based on the premise that actual infinites cannot exist, Craig is now content to accept that the singularity's spacetime curvature, temperature, pressure and density are infinite, to go along with God's qualitative infiniteness and eternalness, seemingly oblivious to the apparent contradiction. Craig is so impressed by the implications of the universe's expansion and the concept of the singularity (which may be a mere idealisation), that he triumphantly announces that:

> The standard Big Bang model, as the Friedman-Lemaître model came to be called, thus describes a universe which is not eternal in the past, but which came into being a finite time ago. Moreover – and this deserves underscoring – the origin it posits is an absolute origin out of nothing. For not only all matter and energy, but space and time themselves come into being at the initial cosmological singularity.[184]

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[181] Throughout, the term 'likelihood' is used informally as a synonym for 'probability'. The term will be employed more technically when discussing Bayesian analyses.

[182] Craig (RF), pp. 125–126.

[183] Ibid., p. 126.

[184] Ibid., p. 127.

As further proof of a finitely old universe, Craig appeals to the astronomers and physicists, J. Richard Gott III, James E. Gunn, David N. Schramm, and Beatrice M. Tinsley as explaining that time began at the Big Bang, so it "is not meaningful to ask what happened before the big bang".[185] Interestingly, on the very same page of the article quoted by Craig, these reputable scientists explained that the "point-universe was not an object isolated in space; it was the entire universe".[186] Indeed, if the origins of the universe lie with the singularity, of which very little is known, and the singularity 'before' the Big Bang occurred was all that existed, then the singularity may be adequately described as being 'the universe'. This poses a number of critical problems for Craig's thesis.

This 'pre-Big Bang' universe exists outside of time as Craig understands it; it is timeless. In this sense, then, it seems that Craig's favoured Big Bang model does not at all preclude the possibility of an 'infinitely old' or 'eternal' universe, in the sense that he claims that God, seemingly subject to 'undifferentiated time', is 'infinitely old' or 'eternal'. Note that it is this 'undifferentiated time' which allows theists like Craig to avoid the paradox that God creates 'our time', though causes precede events in time; but if this 'undifferentiated time' applies to God, it must be explained why it cannot also apply to a pre-Big Bang universe. Just as Craig's God already existed and simply became temporal at the Big Bang, so too could the pre-Big Bang universe have already existed and become temporal around the moment of the Big Bang. Furthermore, this model does not at all indicate the universe's true beginning 'out of nothing'. The Big Bang model describes the *expansion* of the universe from the singularity. Where the singularity came from, how old it is, and what it actually is, is all unknown, so that Craig cannot assume that the model supports *creatio ex nihilo*. It also seems to be over-reaching on Craig's part, to equate the singularity with 'nothing'.[187]

It is possible that the singularity is comparable with the quantum vacuum or some other universal substratum, or at least that its origins lie in such. Not enough is known about the singularity, to declare that it somehow entails a true beginning from nothing. The singularity does not provide the stopping point for all these questions, as Craig indicates. Rather, it serves as the launching pad for yet more – and possibly unanswerable – questions. As Smoot noted, the "singularity would be the ultimate

[185] Ibid., p. 127.

[186] J. Richard Gott III et al., "Will the Universe Expand Forever?," *Scientific American*, March 1976, 65.

[187] He had earlier indicated just that, supposing that "the initial cosmological singularity is not an existent. . . the singularity represents the point at which the universe ceases to exist. . . an object that has no spatial dimensions and has no temporal duration hardly seems to qualify as a physical object at all, but is rather a mathematical conceptualization." This is, of course, numerously question-begging and results in special pleading for theism; surely Craig does not suppose that his 'non-physical' God is a mere 'mathematical conceptualization'. Why an infinite and timeless singularity could be considered nothing while the infinite and timeless God would not be is left unexplained by Craig. See William Lane Craig and Quentin Smith, *Theism, Atheism, and Big Bang Cosmology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 227.

barrier to human knowledge".[188] Craig may object, however, that even cosmologists endorse the view that the universe arose from nothing, but that would seem disingenuous, given his understanding that his philosophical view of nothing is something else entirely.[189] Craig continues to link the singularity to *creatio ex nihilo*:

> On such a model the universe originates *ex nihilo* in the sense that at the initial singularity it is true that *there is no earlier spacetime point* or it is false that *something existed prior to the singularity*. [190]

That there is no earlier spacetime point for the *current form of the universe* is irrelevant; the singularity is still 'the universe'. On assuming that something did not exist prior to the Big Bang singularity, Craig overlooks that the singularity is something in itself, and begs the question besides. The Big Bang singularity in no way indicates a true beginning, *ex nihilo*. Craig seems unwilling to acknowledge, that the Big Bang singularity, like God prior to the Big Bang, is timeless; likening the Big Bang singularity to God is probably something Craig tries to avoid. In fact, the singularity seems to be infinite, immaterial, timeless, spaceless (as material, time, and space supposedly come into being at the Big Bang), possibly eternal, uncaused, and necessary, and was responsible for the 'creation' of the universe.[191] The singularity appears to be quite 'god-like'; though this would be a naturalistic concept of god.[192] However, if the property of consciousness is bestowed on this singularity, or the Aristotelian substratum, or the quantum vacuum, then the 'pre-universe universe' would be easily identified with a pandeistic or panentheistic god; a god that – wholly or partly – becomes the universe. Craig's unjustified attempt then, to indicate that the universe's pseudo-beginning implies 'supernatural' or 'metaphysical' conclusions, does not necessarily benefit his own theistic theory.[193]

Satisfied by the conclusions he draws from the standard Big Bang model, Craig derides alternatives as being "failed attempts... to avert the absolute beginning predicted by the Standard Model", going so far as to indicate that these alternative

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[188]George Smoot and Keay Davidson, *Wrinkles in Time* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1993), p. 36.

[189]"Popular magazine articles touting such theories as getting "something from nothing" simply do not understand that the vacuum is not nothing but is a sea of fluctuating energy endowed with a rich structure and subject to physical laws. Such models do not therefore involve a true origination *ex nihilo*." See Craig (RF), p. 115.

[190]Ibid., p. 128.

[191]It would be difficult, then, even if simplicity were truth-conducive, to claim that God should be the ultimate stopping point on account of God's 'simplicity' (commonly justified by way of infinite properties), as the singularity may similarly be as 'simple'.

[192]It is odd that Craig does not seriously consider such possibilities. He later admits that the singularity is timeless and strangely uses this as an analogy, to describe God: "The initial Big Bang singularity is not considered to be part of physical time, but to constitute a boundary to time. Nevertheless, it is causally connected to the universe. In an analogous way, we could say that God's timeless eternity is, as it were, a boundary of time which is causally, but not temporally, prior to the origin of the universe". See Craig (RF), p. 156.

[193]Ibid., p. 128.

theories give lay people the (apparently false) impression that the field of cosmology is uncertain.[194] Craig glosses over the seemingly obsolete steady-state model,[195] but too hastily dismisses oscillating models, wherein the universe continuously expands and contracts, even calling them "extraordinarily speculative".[196] There is too much that is unknown about the singularity for such possibilities to be so casually dismissed. Craig then disregards vacuum fluctuation models, which involve an eternal 'primordial vacuum', by which universes, or 'mini-universes' are born.[197] Craig then turns his attention to inflationary theories, such as Andrei Linde's chaotic inflationary model, which involves a "wider, eternal multiverse of worlds".[198] Craig is unimpressed by such inflationary multiverse hypotheses, which are inherently speculative, though we have better evidence for the multiverse than we do for God,[199] as he thinks that they would not be expected to avoid the singularity at the "absolute beginning".[200]

Quantum gravity models are also considered, with Craig declaring that they too, do not reasonably avoid a singularity, and "like the Standard Model, imply the

[194]Ibid., p. 139–140.

[195]Ibid., p. 128–129.

[196]In what may literally be the biggest example of the pot calling the kettle black, Craig's unsubstantiated theory that the Big Bang singularity is or derives from absolutely nothing is one of the most speculative theories of all. See ibid., p. 129–130. Craig may also be asking the wrong questions. He is greatly influenced by Leibniz's famous assertion, that "The first question which should rightly be asked is: Why is there something rather than nothing?" See Gottfried Wilhelm Freiherr von Leibniz, "The Principles of Nature and of Grace, Based on Reason," in *Leibniz Selections*, ed. Philip Paul Wiener (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 527. Instead of considering why there is something rather than nothing, he might consider why a state of nothingness should be preferred as the most natural scenario. For a compelling treatment of the something-nothing debate, including the flippancy of the intent of the Leibnizian question (which leads to the principle of sufficient reason that props up Craig's contingency and *kalām* cosmological arguments), the need for classical theists to discuss the issue, and the assumptions commonly made about nothingness, see Purushottama Bilimoria, "Why Is There Nothing Rather Than Something? An Essay in the Comparative Metaphysic of Nonbeing," *Sophia* 51, no. 4 (2012): 509–530. Interestingly, there is only truly one 'nothing' scenario, while there are infinitely many 'something' scenarios.

[197]Craig (RF), p. 131–132.

[198]Ibid., p. 133. There is no reason to suppose that it is impossible for this observable universe to be part of a greater multiverse. Interestingly, early humankind may have found it difficult to suppose that anything beyond the Earth, our solar system, or the Milky Way galaxy exists, just as animals deep underwater may be ignorant to the existence of land and what lies beyond. Similarly, given the expansion of the universe, it is plausible that the galaxies will become so distant that sentient beings assume that their galaxy is 'the whole universe' or the 'totality of all there is' when it clearly would not be.

[199]Ranga-Ram Chary's analysis of the cosmic microwave background revealed anomalies that may have been caused by our universe's collision with another. This does not prove the multiverse, but it is certainly better evidence than we have for God. See Ranga-Ram Chary, "Spectral Variations of the Sky: Constraints on Alternate Universes," *The Astrophysical Journal* 817, no. 1 (2016): doi:10.3847/0004-3637X/3817/3841/3833.

[200]Craig (RF), p. 133.

beginning of the universe".[201] Craig is also unimpressed by string scenarios, such as M-theory, declaring string cosmology as being "the extreme edge of cosmological speculation", and noting that *some* of them also do not avoid the universe's beginning.[202] Apparently, the ones that do avoid the universe's beginning are not worth considering. While so easily dismissing many of the theories put forth by qualified cosmologists, Craig does appeal to the scientific research he finds helpful. This may seem somewhat strange in the sense that these experts tend to disagree with his conclusions. Compared with the general public, American scientists are far more irreligious and avowedly atheistic; the scientists that believe in God the least are physicists and astronomers.[203] It is not insignificant that those who are presumably the most knowledgeable about cosmology are less likely to believe in God, which is precisely the opposite of what would be expected if theism were true. Nevertheless, throughout his discussion of his first scientific argument for the universe's beginning, and again in the concluding remarks, Craig refers to the Borde-Guth-Vilenkin (BGV) theorem, usually through the book, *Many Worlds in One*, as effectively proving "the absolute beginning of the universe".[204] Unfortunately for Craig, it does not. In Borde, Guth and Vilenkin's landmark paper, they state:

> This is a stronger conclusion than the one arrived at in previous work in that we have shown under reasonable assumptions that almost all causal geodesics, when extended to the past of an arbitrary point, reach the boundary of the inflating region of spacetime in a finite proper time (finite affine length, in the null case). What can lie beyond this boundary? Several possibilities have been discussed, one being that the boundary of the inflating region corresponds to the beginning of the Universe in a quantum nucleation event.[205]

In an earlier paper, Vilenkin discusses these quantum nucleation events, which amount to the quantum tunnelling predicated by vacuum fluctuation scenarios.[206] Despite another cosmologist using the term 'nothing', Craig understands the difference between the way modern physicists use the term and what he describes as being

[201] Ibid., p. 134–135.

[202] Ibid., p. 136–139. Note that Craig eagerly points out the flaws of alternative cosmological theories, which does nothing to address the possible cosmological scenarios not yet conceived. It seems then that Craig's strategy does rely on some appeal to ignorance; he effectively presents a god-of-the-gaps argument.

[203] PewResearchCenter. "Section 4: Scientists, Politics and Religion," accessed 09/02/2017, http://www.people-press.org/2009/07/09/section-4-scientists-politics-and-religion.

[204] Craig (RF), p. 140. There are also contemporary models avoiding the absolute beginning of the universe. See Anthony Aguirre and Steven Gratton, "Steady-State Eternal Inflation," *Physical Review D* 65, no. 8 (2002): 1–7; Sean M. Carroll and Jennifer Chen, "Spontaneous Inflation and the Origin of the Arrow of Time," no. arXiv:hep-th/0410270 (2004): 1–36.

[205] Arvind Borde, Alan H. Guth, and Alexander Vilenkin, "Inflationary Spacetimes are not Past-Complete," *Physical Review Letters* 90, no. 10.1103/PhysRevLett.90.151301 (2003): 3–4.

[206] Alexander Vilenkin, "Creation of Universes from Nothing," *Physics Letters* B117, no. 1–2 (1982): 25–28.

nothing.[207] He even states this in his review of *Many Worlds in One*: "Vilenkin himself seems to realize that he has not really described the tunneling of the universe from literally nothing".[208] Appropriately, in the very book Craig quotes, Vilenkin says that taking the evidence of the universe's beginning as proof of God's existence is "far too simplistic" and that the theorem he helped develop "does not give much of an advantage to the theologian over the scientist".[209] Furthermore, seemingly surprised at the realisation that their work is being used for the benefit of theological 'theories', Guth and Vilenkin have been in discussions with fellow scientists, who actively oppose Craig's approach. According to cosmologist Sean Carroll, Guth said, "I suspect the universe *didn't* have a beginning."[210] To Victor Stenger, Vilenkin revealed his concern at Craig's use of the term 'absolute beginning', admitted to the possibility of infinitely old particles, and stated that his theorem does not prove that the universe must have had a beginning, but that the *expansion* of the universe must have had a beginning.[211]

Lawrence Krauss, also suspicious of Craig's references, contacted Vilenkin for clarification, and discussed the results with Craig, which became a topic at their 2013 series of debates in Australia.[212] After Krauss declared that Craig had misquoted Vilenkin's theorem, as the latter admits the limitations of it, Craig objected to the truncated email proffered as evidence and published a more complete correspondence with Vilenkin on his official website.[213] While Craig somehow feels vindicated that Vilenkin's email supports his own cosmological hypotheses, Vilenkin actually admits that "Any theorem is only as good as its assumptions" and that "A possible loophole is that there might be an epoch of contraction prior to the expansion".[214] After revealing that he is currently "exploring a picture of the multiverse where the BGV theorem may not apply", Vilenkin concludes:

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[207]"... the vacuum is not nothing but is a sea of fluctuating energy endowed with a rich structure and subject to physical laws. Such models do not therefore involve a true origination *ex nihilo*." See Craig (RF), p. 115. Craig says as much while commenting on the very same Vilenkin article. See William Lane Craig, "The Caused Beginning of the Universe: A Response to Quentin Smith," *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 44, no. 4 (1993): 623–639.

[208]William Lane Craig, "Vilenkin's Cosmic Vision: A Review Essay of Many Worlds in One: The Search for Other Universes," *Philosophia Christi* 11, no. 1 (2009): 232–238.

[209]Alexander Vilenkin, *Many Worlds in One: The Search for Other Universes*, 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), p. 176.

[210]Robert B. Stewart, ed. *God and Cosmology: William Lane Craig and Sean Carroll in Dialogue* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2016), p. 70.

[211]Victor J. Stenger, *The Fallacy of Fine-Tuning: Why the Universe is not Designed for Us* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2011), pp. 127–130.

[212]William Lane Craig and Lawrence Maxwell Krauss, *Life, the Universe and Nothing: Is it Reasonable to Believe there is a God?* (Melbourne: City Bible Forum, 2013), Video recording.

[213]William Lane Craig. ""Honesty, Transparency, Full Disclosure" and the Borde-Guth-Vilenkin Theorem," accessed 03/12/2013, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/honesty-transparency-full-disclosure-and-bgv-theorem.

[214]Ibid.

> I suspect that the theorem can be extended to this case, maybe with some additional assumptions. But of course there is no such thing as absolute certainty in science, especially in matters like the creation of the universe. Note for example that the BGV theorem uses a classical picture of spacetime. In the regime where gravity becomes essentially quantum, we may not even know the right questions to ask.[215]

As per my earlier comments, the evidence only indicates that the *expansion* of this universe had a beginning; whether the universe came into being from absolutely nothing around that time is another matter entirely. And given that around that time the poorly understood quantum – rather than the well understood classical – mechanics applies, any conclusions would only be speculative. Craig then surprisingly publishes his own personal email exchange with Vilenkin, who admits, that in science, "there are always caveats" and doubts that "Lawrence would intentionally misinterpret" his views.[216] That Vilenkin rates very highly his theorem, nevertheless acknowledging its limitations, is made evident in his concluding remarks:

> The question of whether or not the universe had a beginning assumes a classical spacetime, in which the notions of time and causality can be defined. On very small time and length scales, quantum fluctuations in the structure of spacetime could be so large that these classical concepts become totally inapplicable. Then we do not really have a language to describe what is happening, because all our physics concepts are deeply rooted in the concepts of space and time. This is what I mean when I say that we do not even know what the right questions are. But if the fluctuations are not so wild as to invalidate classical spacetime, the BGV theorem is immune to any possible modifications of Einstein's equations which may be caused by quantum effects.[217]

Craig, however, notes that his arguments do not rely on claims to certainty, but on his premises being probable on account of the evidence.[218] Indeed, from a probabilistic and especially Bayesian perspective, if the evidence does point to the universe's beginning, then it should be concluded that the universe probably had a beginning. The issue for Craig is that the evidence for the standard Big Bang model and the Borde-Guth-Vilenkin theorem does not point to the beginning of the universe, but to the beginning of the *expansion* of the universe; nor is it known what the singularity or pre-expansion universe actually is and for how long it has existed. As all respectable cosmologists will acknowledge, given that there is no complete theory for quantum gravity as yet, and that cosmological models are only as good as their assumptions, what actually happened at T=0 is completely unknown. Craig's claim that the expansion of the universe demonstrates the beginning of the universe, and further that this applies to 'all things that exist' (apart from God), and that the beginning is *ex nihilo*, is unwarranted. This is somewhat admitted to by Craig, noting that "an accurate physical description of the

[215] Ibid.

[216] A speculative thought, but it could be significant that Craig addresses Vilenkin as 'Prof. Vilenkin', with Vilenkin addressing Craig as 'Bill'. Vilenkin might not only be disagreeing with Craig, but subtly reminding him who the cosmological authorities are, just as he previously demarcated between theologians and scientists. See ibid.

[217] Ibid.

[218] Craig (RF), p. 140.

universe prior to the Planck time remains and perhaps always will remain unknown" and that this affords "room for speculations aimed at averting the origin of time and space implied by the expanding cosmos".[219]

Craig's second scientific argument for the universe's beginning concerns the thermodynamic properties of the universe. He begins by asserting that "the universe is, on the atheistic view, a gigantic closed system" and invokes the second law of thermodynamics, suggesting that an infinitely-old universe would already have reached a state of equilibrium, and would thus be "dead".[220] Recognising that the "advent of relativity theory and its application to cosmology altered the shape" of this eschatological scenario,[221] Craig explains that the universe would expand forever, somehow resulting in a state of maximum entropy, with all matter having decayed, making for a 'cold' death.[222] The only alternative, says Craig, is that the universe will collapse into itself "in a fiery Big Crunch", a 'hot' death, from "which the universe will never reemerge".[223] His only support for this claim is that "There is no known physics that would permit the universe to bounce back".[224] This is a surprising strategy, given that there is also no known physics that states that the universe would definitely not bounce back, and that things can and do come into being from nothing. Indeed, both of Craig's scientific arguments are subject to the fact that we lack complete information about the natural laws of the universe, and that they might also be different 'outside' this observable universe. Craig agrees that there is more than the observable universe, since there exists God, in his – eternal – realm; obviously, different laws must apply there.

One possibility overlooked by Craig is that there is an as-yet-unknown natural mechanism that lowers the universe's entropy and thus prevents an ongoing 'entropy death'. This would also increase the feasibility of the oscillating universe theories Craig rejects. This is arguably speculative, though no more than Craig's appeals to the unproven concepts – not percepts – of 'nothing' and 'God'; perhaps even less so as no appeal to the supernatural is necessary. Just as Oppy counter-intuitively and brilliantly embraces the supposed absurdities inherent in the concept of actual infinites in critiquing the first premise, so too can scholars embrace the infinite number of exceedingly-speculative and empirically-unverified naturalistic possible hypotheses, which seem no more unjustified than – and are arguably superior to – Craig's supernatural hypotheses. Such speculations may not even be necessary, however, for Craig misuses the second law of thermodynamics.

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[219] Ibid., p. 150. Craig acknowledges that general relativity "breaks down" at the quantum level and that "no one is sure how this [subatomic physics] is to be done". It is astounding then, that Craig continues to argue, with such certainty, that this points to an absolute beginning of the universe, from nothing. See Craig (OG), p. 91.

[220] Craig (RF), pp. 140–141.

[221] Such as the universe's continual expansion preventing a state of equilibrium.

[222] Craig (RF), p. 143.

[223] Ibid., p. 142.

[224] Ibid., p. 142.

One critical error in Craig's reasoning is that it cannot be said that entropy will always increase. It is more correct to say that entropy *almost* always increases. No matter how miniscule is the possibility, it is possible that there are instances of spontaneously decreased entropy, leading to 'recurrences' of previous entropic states. If the universe is infinitely old, the very premise under consideration, then the unimaginably small possibility of such spontaneous reductions in entropy resulting in the observable universe is irrelevant; it will happen.[225] Given infinite time, this is expected to happen, even an infinite number of times. The possibility of these recurrences is discussed by physicists Lisa Dyson, Matthew Kleban, and Leonard Susskind, who note that, "these recurrences cannot be described by classical general relativity".[226] In contradistinction with Craig's assurances, the physicists explain that, "given enough time and a suitable inflation, recurrences will eventually bring the box to a configuration that could serve as an initial starting point for a standard inflationary theory. The entropy of such configurations is very low".[227] And while Craig's eschatological scenario may not be completely unavoidable, Dyson, Kleban and Susskind reassuringly imply that 'entropy death' is temporary, particularly with long timeframes.[228] They also allow for the possibility of an infinite past:

> On such long time scales the second law of thermodynamics does not prevent rare events, which effectively reverse the direction of entropy change. Obviously, the recurrence allows the entire process of cosmology to begin again, although with a slightly different initial condition. What is more, the sequence of recurrences will stretch into the infinite past and future.[229]

Interestingly, any evidence of a 'permanent' entropy death could arguably be considered as being more expected on naturalism than on the hypothesis involving a human-loving god who is very good, very clever, and very powerful, though that does not necessarily entail that all naturalistic scenarios end up with entropy death. In any case, Craig prematurely ends his eschatological theorising with the death of the universe. But like the phoenix, the universe is birthed anew. Craig does understand that these thermal fluctuations are possible and counters:

> Thus, in the multiverse of worlds, observable states involving such an initial low entropy condition will be an incomprehensibly tiny fraction of all the observable states there are. If we are just one random member of an ensemble of worlds, we should therefore be observing

[225]Cf. Sean M. Carroll. "The Bayesian Second Law of Thermodynamics," accessed 23/12/2016, http://www.preposterousuniverse.com/blog/2015/08/11/the-bayesian-second-law-of-thermodynamics.

[226]Lisa Dyson, Matthew Kleban, and Leonard Susskind, "Disturbing Implications of a Cosmological Constant," *Journal of High Energy Physics*, no. arXiv:hep-th/0208013v3 (2002): 6.

[227]Ibid.: 18.

[228]Ibid.: 3.

[229]Ibid.: 3. Consider also that these laws do not apply at the Big Bang, and also that increasing entropy does not equate to decreasing order. For some discussion of the latter, see the Nobel Prize winning work of Prigogine concerning dissipative systems. As an example, see Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature* (London: Heinemann, 1984).

> a smaller world... the most probable state which is adequate to support our ordered observations is an even smaller "universe" consisting of a single brain...[230]

And so Craig brings forth his 'invasion of the Boltzmann brains' notion, which indicates that many – even most – universes would essentially consist of a single brain. On the one hand, Craig's reasoning is fallacious, as, in his view, any observable universe would simply be 'too big', despite the fact that very large universes would indeed occur, including universes larger than this one.[231] On the other hand, the possibility that the observer's brain is all that truly exists causes no serious problems to the critic of Craig's argument, and actually needs to be ruled out by him, despite his protestations that it "seems crazy".[232] If Craig wishes to view the universe as the result of his overactive imagination, theism is actually done a disservice and the agnostic a-theist has an easy answer for evangelists. Moreover, with the 'early universe' a complete unknown to cosmologists, Craig's thermodynamic argument can only truly be said to indicate a beginning to the currently increasing entropy of the universe, just as the first scientific argument only indicates a beginning to the current expansion of the universe; not the beginning of the universe *per se*. Nevertheless, Craig concludes that this, and his other three arguments, demonstrates the beginning of the universe.[233]

As implied earlier, that this current form of the universe had a 'pseudo-beginning' is actually irrelevant to Craig's case. That the universe has changed is unremarkable. It experiences such pseudo-beginnings on a daily basis, as the molecules and more fundamental particles constantly find themselves in alternative arrangements; at every moment there exists a different time-slice of the universe. What would be remarkable, of course, is a true beginning from nothing, for which there is absolutely no evidence. The singularity may seem remarkable, as each time-slice could theoretically be proceeded and caused by a similar one, though it presents cosmologists with an end to backward-extrapolation; one that is a compete unknown.[234] For this reason, Craig triumphantly proclaims a true beginning. And yet for this same reason, he is wholly unjustified in doing so. A more transparent and evidentially justifiable – though less impressive – second premise might look like this:

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[230]Craig (RF), p. 148. Cf. Craig (OG), p. 93. Craig acknowledges the possibility of thermal fluctuations and disequilibrium. Given infinite time, it is largely irrelevant how unlikely they might be.

[231]The same objection could be applied to Craig's supernatural hypothesis. If the universe were created and finely tuned (discussed in the following section) for humankind, why is it bigger than the Milky Way galaxy, or even our solar system? We can also wonder why seemingly random and contingent events, like a meteor eliminating the dinosaurs, would be necessary for the development of humankind. This all seems unnecessary and inefficient. Perhaps God could have exerted less effort in crafting such an unnecessarily-large and old universe, most of which is inhospitable, and focussed more efforts on avoiding the problem of religious diversity and reducing gratuitous suffering. These themes will be discussed throughout.

[232]Craig (RF), p. 149.

[233]Ibid., p. 150.

[234]The theistic philosopher may demand an explanation for the complete series of infinite time-slices, though it is not obvious that one would be needed. The principle of collective causation only obviously holds for finite collections. Furthermore, the same may be demanded of God and his supposedly infinite metaphysical space/time.

(2′) The possibly-eternal observable universe, changed into its current form a finite time ago.

2.3.4 *The Cause of the Universe*

This important argument already found unconvincing for a plethora of reasons, it is interesting to note how Craig figures that the cause of the universe must be God. Supposing the truth of premises (1) and (2), and lemma (3), a multitude of scenarios is possible. Craig however, does have some strategies for arguing not only that the cause must be a supernatural one, but also that it must be the god of theism, rather than some alternative god or gods. Craig begins by ruling out Daniel Dennett's self-caused universe as it is "metaphysically absurd", though the same could be said of his *ex nihilo* assertion.[235] Given the uncertainties around the time of the universal singularity, and the further uncertainties around the concept of 'nothing', it seems hasty to rule out epistemic possibilities such as 'no cause' or 'self-cause'. Craig then wastes no time in asserting that this external cause must be timeless, changeless, and immaterial (which begs the question as to what does and does not exist apart from the observable universe), beginningless, and uncaused.[236]

Craig surprisingly uses the typical critic's response of a possible infinite regress of causes to his own advantage, in asserting that the cause must necessarily be uncaused, again begging the question in favour of his monotheistic theism. There could, of course, be multiple levels of causes or gods, with each level possibly containing numerous causes and/or gods. Maybe there cannot be infinitely many causes, but it does not follow that there cannot be 27, or 330 million. Craig appeals to Ockham's Razor, which was devised by another Christian theologian, as if it were some infallible law of science.[237] If invoking Ockham's Razor tacitly encourages the view that fewer causes or gods result in the more likely hypothesis, used consistently the principle would state that postulating no cause, or at least no god at all, is most reasonable.[238]

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[235] Craig (RF), p. 152.

[236] Ibid., p. 152. Note that nothing is known about immaterial or non-physical causation, so that it is not at all obvious that the only viable options must revolve around an external god or gods.

[237] Ibid., p. 152.

[238] Consider also a pantheistic scenario, where the universe is divine. Assuming no 'external' god is simpler than postulating an external god. Also, simplicity may not be the only factor in determining the appeal of a hypothesis. Explanatory power may also be critical, and yet Craig makes no attempt here to compare the explanatory power of the various god-models. I shall attempt this in Part 3. Interestingly, Sean Carroll explains that the God hypothesis complicates matters, and explains why most cosmologists are atheists (despite Craig's using their work to support theism). See Sean M. Carroll, "Why (Almost All) Cosmologists are Atheists," *Faith and Philosophy* 22, no. 5 (2005): 622–635. Note also that 'one cause' does not necessarily preclude the existence of more than one god.

Indeed, the point that Ockham was making was that we should not go beyond what is necessary to explain the evidence, something that theism violates in spades.[239] If Craig wishes to argue that *creatio ex nihilo* occurred, or is even possible, it seems equally reasonable to assume that this could occur without a godly cause. There are many more problems with Craig's appeal to simplicity. Firstly, it is not necessarily the case that Craig's monotheistic theism is indeed simpler than alternatives such as a polytheism involving 420 gods, or one involving 666 gods.[240] Nor does a possibly simpler entity necessarily lead to a simpler explanation. Without adequate background knowledge, how are determinations to be made on what constitutes a simpler explanation or thing? Is room temperature simpler than a handful of coffee beans? Are these both more complex than the colour purple? Given that simplicity is attributive, perhaps the theories cannot be meaningfully thus compared, particularly as theism is supposedly unique; God's uniqueness would seemingly preclude any meaningful comparison. Secondly, even if Craig is successful in arguing for the relative simplicity of his explanation, or entity, simplicity is not necessarily truth-conducive.[241]

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[239]In fact, while Craig may not use it consistently, Ockham's Razor can be useful in probabilistic analyses, especially when it aids in determining relative priors in Bayesian calculations. Cf. William H. Jefferys and James O. Berger, "Ockham's Razor and Bayesian Analysis," *American Scientist* 80, no. 1 (1992): 64–72.

[240]Nor could God's being an unembodied mind be claimed to be simple, so that critics would not claim that the explanation needs an explanation. Perhaps this demonstrates simplicity of structure, but certainly also complexity of function. Even with these distinct notions, it is not clear how such complex functions could derive from so simple a structure.

[241]There are numerous examples of simpler theories being replaced by apparently more complex theories. In classical thought, for example, four or five elements were postulated, though scientists now identify approximately one hundred elements. Young-earth creationism has also been soundly discredited as an explanation for the diversity of species on Earth, by Darwin's much more complex theory of evolution, which involves billions of years of mutations and bloodshed. Philosopher of science Peter Kosso explains that "Simplicity is clearly a pragmatic virtue, and for that reason it is a good thing to strive for. But we have yet to see the connection between being simple and being true". See Peter Kosso, *Reading the Book of Nature: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 46. Noting that equating truth and simplicity is groundless, van Fraassen argues along similar lines. See Bas C. van Fraassen, *The Scientific Image* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980). For critiques on this notion relating to Philosophy of Religion (specifically Swinburne's appeal to simplicity), see Julia Göhner, Marie I. Kaiser, and Christian Suhm, "Is Simplicity an Adequate Criterion of Theory Choice?," in *Richard Swinburne: Christian Philosophy in a Modern World*, ed. Nicola Mößner, Sebastian Schmoranzer, and Christian Weidemann (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), pp. 33–46; Johannes Korbmacher, Sebastian Schmoranzer, and Ansgar Seide, "Simply False? Swinburne on Simplicity as Evidence of Truth," in *Richard Swinburne: Christian Philosophy in a Modern World*, ed. Nicola Mößner, Sebastian Schmoranzer, and Christian Weidemann (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), pp. 47–60. Paul Draper's concept of simplicity, concerning objective uniformity, is admitted by him as being controversial, and does not lead to the conclusion that one god is simpler than more than one. It does, however, lead to the conclusion that no god at all is simpler. See Paul Draper. "Natural Selection and the Problem of Evil," accessed 03/07/2015, http://infidels.org/library/modern/paul_draper/evil.html. Interestingly, in a paper presented at Purdue University, Draper also expressed his doubts about Swinburne's claims regarding theism's alleged simplicity: "Swinburne needs to explain why being simple, or having a formulation that is simple, in any of the five ways he describes, makes the hypothesis more likely to be true." See Paul Draper. "Simplicity and Natural Theology," accessed 05/07/2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rb1GCxQAN1Y.

Thirdly, if all this *were* accepted, it would follow that theism is more likely true compared with any particular polytheistic theory. It does not follow that this particular polytheistic theory, and especially all the others, can be instantly overlooked. In fact, as polytheism is a 'catch-all hypothesis', there are an infinite number of possible polytheistic hypotheses. Even if Craig's theism is assumed more probably true than any one polytheistic scenario on the basis of *simplex veri sigillum*, in a proper probabilistic analysis it plausibly becomes overwhelmed by the sheer number of alternatives, so that the likelihood of Craig's theistic hypothesis being true is incalculable yet effectively 0%, even when *ex nihilo* creation and supernatural causation is assumed true.[242] Furthermore, if theism is contrasted with a pantheistic polytheism, then the latter may actually be simpler as there is less appeal to critical unknowns, namely, the assumption of dualism and the concept of *creatio ex nihilo*. There are even many Christian scholars who deny the evidentially unsupported *creatio ex nihilo*, such as Thomas Jay Oord and Stephen Webb, with many of those favouring some sort of pantheistic interpretation.[243] This unprecedented critique demonstrates that refuting Craig's base argument (ending in the universe's being caused), and even speculating on possible natural causes, is unnecessary, as his overall argument – for theism – fails by not adequately considering and ruling out alternative god-concepts, particularly ones that are more probable, individually (particularly inherently, as discussed in the following subsection), or collectively, by way of 'sheer numbers'.[244]

Craig continues, merely asserting that the cause is "unimaginably powerful, since it created the universe without any material cause" and that the "transcendent cause is plausibly to be taken as personal".[245] The former claim does not necessitate omnipotence. The latter claim is surprising, as Craig has not exhausted all possible options. Craig's first reason for supposing that the cause is personal is that there can be no "scientific explanation, since there is nothing before it [the universe]" so that the cause must be an "agent and his volitions".[246] This assumes dualism and is obviously contradictory.[247] Craig's second reason for a personal cause is that "the

[242]This shall be elaborated in Part 3.

[243]For example, see the many revealing contributions in Thomas Jay Oord, ed. *Theologies of Creation: Creatio Ex Nihilo and Its New Rivals* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

[244]Craig would doubtless point to this being a 'radical move' by the 'atheist'. My contemplations on the possible pre-universal substratum and various pantheistic gods are important, but not so relevant here (they are highly relevant in providing counter-examples to the second premise) as an *ex nihilo* beginning is assumed at this stage. For an interesting (and technical) treatment of one possible natural cause (though it may not refer to an absolute beginning in the Craigian sense), self cause, see Quentin Smith, "Kalam Cosmological Arguments for Atheism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism*, ed. Martin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[245]Craig (RF), p. 152.

[246]Ibid., pp. 152–153.

[247]Craig has not adequately justified his perceptual distinction between the substance of the universe and whatever substance comprises God. Surely he cannot mean that God is made up of 'nothing'. There is no good reason to assume that the universe is not of, or derives from, the same substance as the deity.

only entities we know of which can possess such properties are either minds or abstract objects, like numbers" and "abstract objects do not stand in causal relations", concluding that the cause must be "of the order of the mind".[248]

That numbers (and abstract objects) do not stand in causal relations is unknown,[249] the existence of Craigian unembodied minds is completely empirically unverified,[250] as is the related notion of substance dualism, and Craig implicitly acknowledges that there may actually be other (non-divine) entities that we do not 'know of'. Craig's third reason stems from the 'problem' of a temporal effect arising from a 'timeless cause', surmising that the only solution is "a personal agent who freely chooses to create a universe in time", and that this intention existed "eternally".[251] The 'eternal intention to create' (cf. the aforementioned necessary intention to create) is required in order to avoid God's changelessness being questioned. This is ad hoc, seemingly contradictory (surely God's free will could not be limited by such eternal intentions),[252] and does nothing to argue for the plausibility of theism relative to alternative god-conceptions.

One interesting objection to God being posited as the universe's cause is the possibility that God also has a cause. Craig, however, points to the fact that (1) shows that only whatever begins to exist has a cause; God apparently did not begin to exist. Craig remarkably explains that "This is not special pleading for God, since the atheist has always maintained the same thing about the universe: it is beginningless and uncaused".[253] This *tu quoque* argument does not, of course, prove God's eternality and reveals Craig's polemical intent. His further comment that the "difference between these two hypotheses is that the atheistic view has now been shown to be untenable" highlights his establishing of a false dichotomy, his privileging of theism, and his dismissive attitude towards alternative god-models.[254] It seems highly inappropriate to use the fact of the universe's existence and its being subject to scientific scrutiny against the 'eternality claim' of the universe, when God's assumed eternality is not falsifiable (in a move that would have irritated Karl

[248]Craig (RF), p. 153.

[249]Cf. Alexander R. Pruss, *The Principle of Sufficient Reason: A Reassessment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 90–91.

[250]The separation of the mind and the body also cannot be justified by way of grammar. A person might claim that they 'have' a mind and that they 'have' a body. It would seem that the person *is* the mind/body, and to claim otherwise is to unnecessarily multiply entities, violating Craig's beloved Ockham's Razor. Interestingly, nobody looks at an image of himself or herself in a photograph, declaring, 'that is my body'. Rather, they would say, 'that is me'. See Philipse (GAS), p. 112. It is also not known if an immaterial thing could cause material things to exist.

[251]Craig (RF), pp. 153–154. See also William Lane Craig and James D. Sinclair, "The Kalam Cosmological Argument," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. Craig and Moreland (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 193–194.

[252]Numerous problems arise due to the conflict of free will and immutability or changelessness, as well as omnipotence. If God can exercise her power and free will, it seems doubtful that God could be described as 'changeless'.

[253]Craig (RF), p. 155.

[254]Ibid., p. 155.

Popper), largely due to the ignorance over God's very existence. It is also worth noting that Craig's God would not be the only thing that could be said to be immaterial, infinite and timeless. 'Nothing' could be described in much the same way. Perhaps the universe did arise out of 'nothing', after all.

2.3.5 Bayesian Analysis

The Bayesian analysis for this argument is more involved than for the previous argument, as there is substantial evidence to consider, and there are two key hypotheses to examine. It is unlikely that a good Bayesian argument could be put forth in this case however, as the prior probability for theism cannot be reasonably quantified, unless it is zero, and the evidence yields the problem of underdetermination; the evidence can reasonably be explained by numerous natural and even supernatural explanations. Now the first of Craig's key hypotheses is that 'the universe began to exist, from nothing', which is put forth as the best explanation for the evidence (Craig's fallacious philosophical arguments for the universe's beginning are ignored here)[255] of the universe's seemingly having a beginning. Immediately, Craig's favoured hypothesis is disadvantaged against alternative hypotheses, as it relies on the concept of 'nothingness' in the background knowledge. Craig does defend the logical plausibility of 'nothing', but that says nothing of metaphysical possibility, and in any case, considerations herein are limited to the evidence.[256] There is no evidence for the 'existence' of nothing, or that something can arise from nothing. There is also a multitude of evidence suggesting that an earlier state of the universe precedes or causes any observable time-slice under consideration, so that the background knowledge may actually favour eternality.

Furthermore, it is unknown if a god or gods would indeed create something from nothing, or if a perfect god would create anything at all.[257] The sceptic can simply claim that assuming God desires human interaction is a mere anthropomorphic projection and that the perfect god would maintain the perfect world, consisting only of the perfect god, pre-creation,[258] and would not commit a great evil in degrading the perfect universe by creating imperfect beings such as humans.[259] A

[255]However, if an eternalist view of time is correct, this should count as evidence against theism, since God would not be obviously necessary.

[256]Craig (RF), p. 156.

[257]Compelling arguments relating to this latter notion have been developed. For example, see Matthew McCormick, "The Paradox of Divine Agency," in *The Impossibility of God*, ed. Michael Martin and Ricki Monnier (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2003), pp. 313–325.

[258]Such thinking could potentially lead to a monistic or pantheistic model, if we see the universe as being all or a part of god.

[259]Claiming that creating is a good is arbitrary, as the opposite can be said to be true, and in this case seems reasonable. Also, God's intentions take on additional importance when considering her omnipotence. If he wills it, it is done.

'bad move', as it were.[260] By this reckoning, the very existence of this imperfect world, with its evil people, and possibly demons, is itself evidence against God's existence. Also, though this is arguably not yet relevant, God, as a perfect being, should be less egotistic and desirous than the average Buddhist, and more content with the status quo – that is, the pre-creation world – than the average Daoist. That God would have such needs seems to go against his being 'perfect'. The theist might object that God's intentions cannot be ascertained, as he is 'mysterious and unknowable', but then a case relying on inductive arguments that put forth God as an explanatory hypothesis with predictive capability, and implicitly appeal to God's intentions, becomes impossible.[261] If God's intentions are inscrutable, the explanatory and predictive power of theism is annulled, and it would be unfeasible to determine if the relevance criterion has been satisfied; that is, that the evidence is more likely given *h*, than on the background information alone.

Also, Craig's retreat to possibility, such as claiming that God must have done *x*, and the assertion that sceptics cannot dispute this as they do not know the ways of God, actually does nothing to raise the overall probability of God's existence. The theist merely transfers the implausibility from the posterior side of the equation (the theory's relation to the evidence), to the anterior side (the inherent implausibility of the theory, on background knowledge). The more claims must be made about God, the less likely it is that *that* god exists. Additionally, those holding to the notion that God is unknowable – which is also used to defend against the argument from evil – cannot be sure of the truth of their personal religious experiences, holy texts, and so forth, as they cannot know that God will not have some very good – but unknown – reason for deceiving them.[262] That God deceives or allows – via some subservient, such as Satan – her people to be deceived would seem to be evidenced by the problem of inconsistent revelations, and this cannot be reasonably refuted by exclusivist believers.[263]

When it is accepted that God's intentions *must* be questioned, it is easy to suppose, as earlier mentioned, that the perfect, and immutable, God would not create anything at all.

[260]Or so thought humorist Douglas Adams, in Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (London: Pan Books, 1979).

[261]This sort of defence has been used for millennia, as can be seen in the chronicling and commentaries of God's treatment of Job. See Job 11, Isaiah 55:8–9. Craig does make use of this defence, particularly when countering the argument from evil: "God could have overriding reasons for allowing the suffering in the world". See Craig (OG), p. 156. Cf. "because of our limitations in space and history, we may not see God's purposes emerge in our lifetime. Therefore we're not in a good position to assess the probabilities of why He permitted a certain evil". Strangely, immediately prior Craig attempts to distance himself from the claim that 'God is mysterious', though this amounts to the same thing. See William Lane Craig and Kai Nielsen. "Does God Exist? The Craig-Nielsen Debate," accessed 05/02/2014, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/does-god-exist-the-craig-nielsen-debate.

[262]This retreat to mysteriousness is thus highly counter-intuitive. Not only can the believer no longer hope to present a good inductive case for God's existence, they would seemingly have good reasons for altering their status as a believer.

[263]For example, most humans are not Judeo-Christians. Also, would a deceiving god still be considered omnibenevolent? Perhaps, but by some unknown – though *obviously* very good – reason.

Such a god would seemingly be content with her situation, and would not need the love, adulation, and entertainment that lesser beings might provide. There is no suitable gift for the God that has everything.[264] It is certainly conceivable (again compare with the views of certain Buddhist or Daoist monks) that the pre-creation God would be content with his situation, and would certainly not need to create companions. Such a being would also plausibly prefer a perfect universe, which is one in which only the perfect God exists, or at least one that operates perfectly. In any case, there are numerous possible hypotheses that do not rely on the empirically unverified concept of *ex nihilo* creation, including supernatural (to wit, pantheistic) hypotheses, which are thus more plausible explanations of the evidence.[265]

The second key hypothesis, *h*, is that 'the cause of the universe is God'. Immediately, this hypothesis is disadvantaged by way of background knowledge and prior probability, with the possibility of naturalistic hypotheses that do not rely on the assumption of dualism and the existence of such empirically unverified objects such as 'unembodied minds' or 'immaterial beings'. Indeed, the latter concepts are completely without evidence, and we have overwhelming evidence for the opposites. But even if the alternative hypotheses are limited to alternative god-concepts, and *ex nihilo* creation is assumed,[266] Craig's theism is still extremely unlikely to be true. As Philipse recognises, there is an infinite number of possible monotheisms that differ from Craig's theism.[267] There is also, as discussed above, an infinite number of polytheisms, in terms of 'levels of gods' and in terms of 'gods per level'.[268]

[264]God's omniscience entails that God would know what would happen and can also experience any associated positive feelings indirectly, though this relies on a disputed notion of omniscience. For a discussion of different interpretations of the term 'omniscience', see Joseph Runzo, "Omniscience and Freedom for Evil," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 12, no. 3 (1981): 131–147.

[265]Furthermore, if there is no beginning at all, certain (non-pandeistic and perhaps non-panentheistic) versions of pantheism are more plausible still, as shall be explored in §3.5. This reveals the catch-all 'hypothesis' of pantheism to be very robust. There is a coherent pantheistic scenario for almost any set of evidence (including that god 'no longer' exists, as in pandeism), which is not the case for theism.

[266]Craig could argue that the explanatory scope of his theistic hypothesis is so vast that there is no relevant background knowledge and a low prior probability cannot be assigned. Whilst it does not avoid the problem of alternative god-concepts, such a strategy would otherwise be unadvisable, as then the hypothesis would be open to innumerable possibilities for disconfirmation, and might be expected to predict trivial future events, such as at what time Craig will eat breakfast tomorrow. In reality, the hypothesis that simply says 'God did it' is the answer that answers everything that answers nothing; it has a very limited explanatory scope. Cf. Philipse (GAS), pp. 207–212.

[267]Ibid., p. 246.

[268]This concept is expanded in §3.3, though charitably and necessarily with relatively smaller numbers, compared with infinity. Craig should meet this with agreement, as he disputes the existence of actual infinites.

Invoking the principle of indifference,[269] and also the principle of countable additivity, would yield equal prior probabilities to all possible hypotheses, so that the prior for theism is effectively 0%.[270] Even if it is granted that theism is the more plausible hypothesis on account of its apparent simplicity (seemingly the only recourse, given the lack of data), the sheer number of alternatives in the catch-all of ~*h* still renders the probability of *h* being true, effectively 0%.[271] Thus, without any precise calculations, sound probabilistic reasoning reveals that the truth of Craig's theistic hypothesis is exceedingly improbable. Moreover, the singularity or an unthinking mechanistic god could be said to be a simpler first cause than God, despite any similarities, due to God being capable of thought.

It is not only this sort of background knowledge that favours alternatives to theism; the more direct evidence also seems to favour an eternal universe. Observers never witness occurrences from nothing, or annihilations into nothing. This is a state of the evidence that coheres perfectly (100%) with the hypothesis of an eternal universe. In the theistic scenario, such observations are more expected – due to God's creative and destructive powers – so that the state of the evidence does not fit perfectly with the theistic hypothesis (some figure smaller than 100%).[272] Referring again to God's intentions, Quentin Smith argues that God would not leave the development of the universe, if relationships with people were his ultimate aim, up to the seemingly inherently chaotic and unpredictable singularity, which could have emitted all manner

[269] Craig is comfortable with this principle, and even invokes it when elaborating on his fine-tuning argument. See Craig (RF), p. 164. Note also that he could have done this when he was worried about the apparently inscrutable priors in a Bayesian analysis, on pp. 54–55. He also alludes to inscrutable figures on pp. 275–280.

[270] The first principle is used due to insufficient background knowledge; all possibilities are thus to be considered equiprobable. They might not be, of course, but with the limited evidence we have, and our desire to avoid a simple agnosticism (this actually suits the atheist, but not the theist attempting to demonstrate theism's being probably true), this is the best that we can hope for. Recall that Bayesian reasoning does not necessarily reveal the truth; it declares what is most reasonable to believe based on the currently available – and admittedly very limited – evidence. While there are those that declare that in full generality the principle of indifference is false, often appealing to the paradox of Joseph Bertrand, this need not apply to a subjectivist Bayesian or frequentist approach, and there are also those that defend the principle. For example, see Greg Novack, "A Defense of the Principle of Indifference," *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 39, no. 6 (2010): 655–678; Wolfgang Tschirk, "The Principle of Indifference Does Not Lead to Contradictions," *International Journal of Statistics and Probability* 5, no. 4 (2016): 79–83. In any case, we either invoke the principle and continue with our calculations, or the theist can admit agnosticism, and thus, admit failure. The second principle is used, as the prior probabilities of all exclusive and exhaustive hypotheses must add to 100%. As such, each prior is almost zero.

[271] Swinburne adds that questions over cooperation make polytheistic explanations less simple. This does not necessarily affect the background knowledge, however, as it alludes to a complete unknown. See Swinburne (EG), p. 147. There are even reasons to think that the lack of co-operation/uniformity in the world could increase polytheism's probability.

[272] A similar Bayesian argument concerning apparent design shall be considered in the following section.

of possible universes.[273] The theist could claim, ad hoc, that God guided this inherently random process to produce non-random results, though that seems to contradict God's power, intelligence, knowledge, and presumably, his efficiency.[274] God could easily have chosen a much more direct and surer route, with fewer interventions being necessary.[275]

2.3.6 Conclusion

Craig's philosophical arguments for the universe's beginning are unconvincing, and rely on the A-Theory of time, which is relatively unpopular amongst philosophers, and even amongst Craig's fellow philosophers of religion. More importantly, Craig's reasons for upholding his theory of time were unconvincing, largely influenced by his intuitions and theology. His scientific arguments about the physical universe's alleged beginning did no more than suggest that the known universe had a pseudo-beginning, which is unremarkable. Craig's claim that the universe, or indeed anything, came from or could come from nothing was left unsubstantiated, as were key implicit premises such as the existence of unembodied minds and the dualistic nature of the world.

Given his ultra-speculative hypothesis, it was surprising to see Craig so casually dismiss many alternative and well-developed models presented by trained cosmologists. My own speculative theories, such as those entailing a 'pre-universal substratum', provide great challenges to Craig's assertions. Craig's attitude towards alternative god-concepts was found to be overly dismissive, particularly with regards to pantheistic god-models, which were not even overtly mentioned. His reliance on

[273] Quentin Smith, "A Big Bang Cosmological Argument for God's Nonexistence," *Faith and Philosophy* 9, no. 2 (1992): 217–237. Craig's response is partly to deny the singularity's existence, which is unconvincing and arbitrary given the Standard Model he endorses. See William Lane Craig, "God and the Initial Cosmological Singularity: A Reply to Quentin Smith," *Faith and Philosophy* 9, no. 2 (1992): 238–248. Note that this scenario poses no problems to a pandeistic god-as-singularity who is content to allow her fate to be determined by chance. Nor would it pose a problem to a hypothesised morally indifferent god who may prefer the excitement of random processes. In fact, *ceteris paribus*, based on the evidence of the singularity, both these alternatives would seem more plausible than theism.

[274] As indicated earlier, this strategy produces a theory that better fits the current evidence, but that also must contend with a higher prior improbability, so that the overall probability is not actually raised.

[275] Without needing to resort to a technical discussion on the logic of counterfactuals, the proposition that God could have opted for a more direct route holds also when the theist claims, ad hoc, that God's omniscience allowed her to know that the desired universe would result out of the lawless and random singularity, without the need for intervention. For a public disagreement on theistic counterfactuals between Smith and Craig, see Quentin Smith, "Atheism, Theism and Big Bang Cosmology," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 69, no. 1 (1991): 48–66; William Lane Craig, "God and the Initial Cosmological Singularity: A Reply to Quentin Smith," *Faith and Philosophy* 9, no. 2 (1992): 238–248.

apparent simplicity was evident throughout, and ironic, given that the simplest hypotheses of all do not posit any gods, or do posit alternative gods.[276] Unfortunately for Craig, sound probabilistic reasoning reveals that even if one of the possible divine hypotheses obtained, it would more plausibly involve some alternative to theism. From a Bayesian perspective, the existence of Craig's preferred kind of god was found to be practically impossible.

The unquestionable failure of this, one of Craig's foundational arguments, casts serious doubts as to the plausibility of Craig's overall case for theism. Since God is defined as being the creator of the universe, it seems that an examination of his further arguments could be redundant. Furthermore, it would be difficult to argue that God designed the universe or communicates with the inhabitants of the universe, if it is already established that God probably did not create the universe and that the theistic God's very existence is vastly improbable. Nevertheless, the remaining putative evidence could tilt the scales back in theism's favour.

2.4 The Teleological Argument

Customarily opening with a historical nod to William Paley and his 'watch-maker argument',[277] Craig's focus is moved to his teleological argument from fine-tuning to design (by God).[278] The argument is not grounded in the mere fact of this universe existing. As physicist Steven Weinberg notes, even a lawless and completely chaotic universe "could be supposed to have been designed by an idiot".[279] Rather, Craig's focus is on this universe permitting the existence of complex life. In claiming that the "discovery of cosmic fine-tuning for intelligent life has led many scientists to

[276]Given the failure of this first cause argument, Craig may wish to argue for a sustaining cause of the universe, as Swinburne does. This would also violate Ockham's Razor, as Rundle explains: "no form of causation, divine or otherwise, is in general required to ensure persistence in being". See Rundle (WTSRN), p. 93.

[277]This is a problematic analogy. For one, it is *known* that watches have intelligent designers and manufacturers, a multitude of them, in fact, while the environs can be comfortably explained, naturally. Curiously, Paley thought that this designer/s had a designer, so that critics may wonder if the otherworldly Designer was also designed. Note that to assert that what applies to the watch must apply to the universe also is to commit the fallacy of composition. The watch was also created *ex materia* by a bodied person or persons, who was not all-knowing, all-powerful or all-good; the postulated creator/designer of the universe need not be either. Moreover, there appears to be something self-defeating about a disanalogous example that relies on the surprise of finding an obviously-designed watch or similar item amid stones, sand and water, when the theist assumes that those other things were also designed. See Craig (RF), pp. 101–103; William Paley and Frederick Ferré, *Natural Theology: Selections* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), pp. 3–4. For more discussion of Paley's watchmaker argument, including the importance of background knowledge, see Oppy (AAG), pp. 174–187.

[278]Craig (RF), pp. 157–172; Craig (OG), pp. 105–126.

[279]Steven Weinberg, *Facing Up: Science and its Cultural Adversaries* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 232.

conclude that such a delicate balance of physical constants and quantities as is requisite for life cannot be dismissed as mere coincidence",[280] Craig makes clear that he feels no need to establish fine-tuning; it is self-evident. This would indeed seem obvious to many of the naturalists Craig intends to convince.[281] If the universe were not somehow finely-tuned for human existence, it would contain no humans. This assumed concept ought to be clarified, however, which Craig attempts:

> By "fine-tuning" one means that small deviations from the actual values of the constants and quantities in question would render the universe life-prohibiting or, alternatively, that the range of life-permitting values is exquisitely narrow in comparison with the range of assumable values.[282]

To provide just one example of this seemingly unlikely universe:

> Oxford physicist Roger Penrose calculates that the odds of the special low entropy condition having arisen sheerly by chance in the absence of any constraining principles is at least as small as about one part in $10^{10(123)}$ in order for our universe to exist.[283]

After indicating that "the key to detecting design is to eliminate the two competing alternatives of physical necessity and chance",[284] Craig provides a disjunctive syllogism:

(1) The fine-tuning of the universe is due to either physical necessity, chance, or design.
(2) It is not due to physical necessity or chance.
(3) Therefore, it is due to design.[285]

Before commenting on (1), it is pertinent to consider just how restrictive Craig's intended explanandum is. Anticipating objections around alternative forms of life, Craig insists that he wishes only to consider a rather narrow "life so defined".[286] This seemingly renders his argument arbitrary, since 'life' is a fluid concept, as is 'complexity'. Are self-replicating chemicals alive?[287] Are self-replicating enzymes?[288] And if simple forms of non-life or life need no such explanation, why assume – akin to the Texas sharpshooter who commits the clustering fallacy – that 'our' sort of life is

[280]Craig (RF), p. 157.

[281]Manson takes issue with the term, 'fine-tuned for life'. See Neil A. Manson, "There Is No Adequate Definition of 'Fine-tuned for Life'," *Inquiry* 43, no. 3 (2000): 341–352.

[282]Craig (RF), p. 158.

[283]Ibid., p. 159.

[284]Ibid., pp. 160–161.

[285]Ibid., p. 161.

[286]Ibid., p. 159.

[287]Alonso Ricardo, "Self-Replication (Chemical),:" in *Encyclopedia of Astrobiology*, ed. Muriel Gargaud, et al. (Berlin: Springer, 2011), pp. 1501–1502.

[288]Tracey A. Lincoln and Gerald F. Joyce, "Self-Sustained Replication of an RNA Enzyme," *Science* 323, no. 5918 (2009): 1229–1232.

particularly significant or complex?[289] Our sort of life may seem as simplistic as a lump of coal to more complex forms of life, and in light of the possibilities for better and more efficient design. If they could, the dinosaurs may have likewise thought the universe designed just for them, the day before they became extinct.[290]

Craig ought to decisively define 'life' and explain under what conditions it can exist. Similar challenges apply to the assumption of the significance of 'order' in the universe, which is a phenomenon that we are familiar with, that we happen to observe, and, conveniently, is a word that we define. A related problem is that complexity can arise naturally out of simplicity, as Darwin's theory demonstrates. Furthering the point on arbitrariness, why not single out an undesirable aspect of the universe, such as rape? It is a fact that our universe was fine-tuned for a great many things, terrible things, including rape. It is undeniable that there are more incidents of rape every hour of every day, than there are known planets with our sort of human life. We can suppose then that the designer clearly had rape at the forefront of her mind, a concept seemingly incompatible with the omnibenevolent god of theism and more consistent with some evil god/s.

Further anticipating objections involving possible universes operating under different laws (with greater leeway for varying constants and quantities), Craig acknowledges the possibility, yet astonishingly proclaims that "such universes are irrelevant to the argument", wishing to refer only to possible universes with the same laws/equations, yet differing values of the constants and quantities.[291] Arguably, when being so specific, anything can be perceived as being vastly improbable, such as wondering why person x was born, rather than the trillions of other possible people that could have emerged from her mother's womb. It is all too easy to isolate a single scenario from an infinite sea of possibilities and then marvel at its apparent improbability; we need to know if this scenario is particularly significant, and if its apparent improbability entails a supernatural designer. And the more restrictive is the explanandum, the more perception plays a role, rendering the argument idiosyncratic and insignificant, which shall be explored further below. Craig attempts to justify these restrictions with the first of his many teleological analogies.

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[289]Philosopher David Benatar also challenges the assumption that human life is a good. He essentially argues that only a life free of pain and suffering would be good, and that non-existence inherently does away with the issue of 'deprived goods'. See David Benatar, *Better Never to Have Been: The Harm of Coming into Existence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Cf. Christoph Fehige's antifrustrationism and Peter Singer's preference utilitarianism. Interestingly, Ecclesiastes 4:1–3 indicates that the dead are happier than the living, and those not born have it best of all, as they have avoided exposure to evil. This raises questions about why an all-good God would commit such an apparent evil in creating us, and in tampering with the presumably perfect pre-Creation world.

[290]Perhaps, unlike humans, their sins were unforgivable.

[291]No sufficient reason is given for why the constants and quantities may be altered, with all else (namely, the laws of nature) being equal. Possibly adding to the confusion is that 'the natural laws' are merely descriptive, and it would seem obvious that different universes would be described differently. It is unknown if changes can be made to the parameters without also changing 'the laws'. See Craig (RF), p. 159.

With the help of John Leslie, Craig asserts that a single bullet striking a fly on a blank area of a wall is "highly improbable" even if the rest of the wall was covered with flies.[292] Why the blank area is so 'large' is not explained, nor is an explanation given as to why the flies outside the blank area are not worth seriously considering.[293] Furthermore, the critic may wonder if the target fly is actually one of the others, and only appears to be in the blank area,[294] and if the rest of the wall might dwarf this blank area (universes with alternative and more 'forgiving' equations may be more probable and numerous), and may contain many more blank areas, so that it is not at all obvious why Craig should limit the discussion to this blank area or possible universes with the same equations as the actual universe. It could be that each fly, including Craig's, is surrounded by a very small blank area. In other words, Craig is merely speculating, even about whether there is a 'problem' that needs explaining. Interestingly, Craig implicitly admits that his approach is speculative, when he accuses others:

> Indeed, once we launch into speculating about universes operating according to different laws of nature, then we have completely lost our tether and have no idea whether such worlds would be preferable to a world like ours, especially in realizing God's redemptive purposes for creatures created in His image.[295]

Nevertheless, Craig somehow asserts that fine-tuning arguments framed on nature's laws are "sloppy" while his approach gives rise to "the correct formulation".[296] With Craig's restrictive explanandum being unresolved, the first premise shall be now considered.

[292] Ibid., p. 159.

[293] A number of philosophers realise that the 'local area' needs to be specified, non-arbitrarily. See Mark Colyvan, Jay L. Garfield, and Graham Priest, "Problems With the Argument from Fine Tuning," *Synthese* 145, no. 3 (2005): 329.

[294] Another interesting possibility is that the shooter aimed for the blank area, and only accidentally hit the fly therein. The creation of humans might have been a mistake, by a less than perfect deity.

[295] William Lane Craig. "Does the Vastness of the Universe Support Naturalism?," accessed 11/07/2016, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/does-the-vastness-of-the-universe-support-naturalism.

[296] Craig (RF), p. 160.

2.4.1 Premise 1 – Three Explanantia

Craig begins by noting that as "fine-tuning" is not synonymous with "design", and as the universe does allow "intelligent life", assuming fine-tuning should be uncontroversial.[297] There is room for much controversy, however, as the focus is on fine-tuning for human life, while there is no good reason to suppose the trans-universality of the value of human – or intelligent – life.[298] Given innumerable species, activities, and other objects that could be the focus, it would seem that perception is crucial in crafting the question. Such an inquisitive human may be as mistaken (or more so, given the scale) as a single audacious *Staphylococcus* bacterium residing on his skin, which supposes that the relatively enormous human being was designed just to be its home. If the mere occurrence of human life prompts the philosopher to claim that the universe is fine-tuned for human life, it is not clear why the same cannot be claimed for other foci.

For example, as above, sexual abuse occurs frequently in the universe, so perhaps the universe can be described as being fine-tuned for sexual abuse. Had God not tweaked the constants in this way, sexual abuse simply would not be possible. Rhetorically then, the sceptic may ask: Why did a good god *intentionally* fine-tune the universe for sexual abuse? A convenient escape is to dismiss such horrendous acts as unpleasant side effects of some greater universal aim, though the same may

[297] Ibid., p. 161. The term 'fine-tuning' may, to many people, indicate design to some extent. It seems to imply that the universe has somehow conspired to produce human life. From another perspective, rather than contemplating the 'mystery' of the universe being 'fine-tuned for humans', the philosopher could contemplate the far less surprising notion of humans, and whatever else exists in the universe, merely complying with the limitations of the universe, and being 'allowed' to exist. For example, stones, slugs, and insects, who are far more numerous than humans, also comply with the universe's parameters, yet nobody seems to wonder about the universe's being miraculously 'fine-tuned' for slugs. And yet, if it is less surprising that simple life exists, the philosopher might consider that it ought not be surprising that more advanced life exists, given well-known evolutionary processes. Note also that if Earth were annihilated, the rest of the universe would be relatively unaffected. From this perspective, it may be easier to accept that intelligent or human life is a fortuitous side effect; after all, a life-permissible universe might still not yield life. Those clumps of molecules that do not comply, fail. Fortuitous side effects are common in pharmacology; the experimental drug designed to combat hypertension, sildenafil, is an example, and is now commonly known as Viagra. Such is the power of perspective. Some may find prolonged penile erection an uncomfortable side-effect, preferring the previously primary anti-hypertensive properties of the drug (which are *now* ironically perceived as being dangerous side-effects), and others will see the side-effect as being the desirable primary effect. See Nicholas K. Terrett et al., "Sildenafil (Viagra), a Potent and Selective Inhibitor of Type 5 CGMP Phosphodiesterase with Utility for the Treatment of Male Erectile Dysfunction," *Bioorganic & Medicinal Chemistry Letters* 6, no. 15 (1996): 1819–1824.

[298] Craig's theistic colleague, T. J. Mawson, agrees that this supposition is crucial to the success of fine-tuning arguments. See T. J. Mawson, "The Case Against Atheism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*, ed. Stephen Bullivant and Michael Ruse (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 30.

be true of human life.[299] Perhaps human life is just an unpleasant side effect of some god's desire to create a world with much sexual abuse. Furthermore, given Craig's reasoning, it can be claimed that the universe was finely-tuned for some existing thing or phenomena that is very rare or even unique.

Now there is also at least one scenario in which the fine-tuning assumption ought be opposed, particularly by theists: the possibility that God sustains intelligent life without fine-tuning the universe to this end. This is not mere cavilling on my part, as the possibility could undermine fine-tuning arguments before they begin, and could also be used in an argument from fine-tuning to naturalism, as will be explored further in the forthcoming Bayesian analysis subsection. Craig goes on to claim that (1) "seems to exhaust the alternatives".[300] This initially appears reasonable as the universe either had to be fine-tuned in this way (necessity) or not. And if not, it would be reasonable to suppose that this happened without intention (chance) or with it (design). There may be other alternatives to design, however, making this quite a risky strategy.[301] Craig's specifying '*physical* necessity' and not clarifying 'design' may also prove problematic. Hence, a slightly altered form of the argument shall prove to be more charitable, yet also more transparent:

(1″) The fine-tuning of the universe is due to intelligent design, or its alternatives.
(2″) It is not due to alternatives to intelligent design.
(3″) Therefore, it is due to intelligent design.

Disadvantages – or rather, advantages – of this formulation include: it is more obviously a god-of-the-gaps argument, it highlights the great challenge of ruling out what may amount to being numerous alternatives that Craig finds disagreeable, and it highlights Craig's respect for intelligent design proponent William Dembski[302]

[299]That human life is an unpleasant side effect of a universe fine-tuned for cockroaches is plausibly demonstrable. Cockroaches predate and outnumber humans, thrive in varying conditions, and do not – yet – threaten the destruction of their planet with nuclear weaponry. Indeed, humans may destroy themselves through nuclear warfare, possibly catalysed by arguments over which non-existent god granted what disputed piece of land to which group of people. The cockroaches endure, eventually helping to rebuild the injured planet, restoring it to former (pre-human) glories. In actuality, while some cockroaches did seemingly survive the nuclear attack on Hiroshima, today's sophisticated weaponry would likely destroy them as well. A more promising candidate for survival is the appropriate named Deinococcus radiodurans. See May Berenbaum, "Rad Roaches," *American Entomologist* 47, no. 3 (2001): 133.

[300]Craig (RF), p. 161.

[301]As Oppy notes, we could consider 'brute contingency', which is not equivalent to 'chance'. This could be the result of uniform symmetry breaking in the early universe (personal communication, May 12, 2015).

[302]Craig (RF), p. 160.

and his associations with the intelligent design 'scientific movement'.[303] Given that necessity and chance are indeed the primary and most obvious rivals to intelligent design, apart from non-intelligent design and hybrid theories, it is generally adequate that the focus lies with them in the upcoming analysis of (2). If they are not convincingly ruled out, then the argument fails, and there is no need as yet to consider other possible alternatives to intelligent design.

2.4.2 Premise 2 – Necessity

Craig begins his assault on the alternatives to intelligent design with a brief objection to the notion that the universe permits life out of necessity:

> Now, on the face of it, this alternative seems extraordinarily implausible. It requires us to believe that a life-prohibiting universe is virtually physically impossible. But surely it does seem possible.[304]

Craig demands "strong proof", says that "there is none", rejects this alternative as "a bare possibility", and laughs off physicists' attempts to discover a Theory of Everything.[305] This alludes to an almost identical issue with the contingency argument, where Craig simply assumed the universe's contingency.[306] He is once again shifting the burden of proof; as the one positing the argument, and asserting the contingency of this universe, or complex life-permitting universes in general, it is Craig who requires "strong proof". And yet, he is only successful in demonstrating that the universe's contingency is conceivable. Craig claims that "within the anthropically allowed range,

[303]For example, Craig is listed as a fellow on the Discovery Institute website. See DI. "Fellows," accessed 18/01/2017, http://www.discovery.org/about/fellows. Craig lauds William Paley's "conclusive" and thorough "evidence of design", found "throughout the animal and plant kingdoms", despite Darwin's theory of evolution by way of natural selection offering a highly plausible and natural explanation, and also fails to applaud Darwin's monumental achievement, finding only time to criticise "neo-Darwinism". See Craig (RF), pp. 101, 157. For some criticisms of intelligent design, particularly on the key concept of 'irreducible complexity', see Oppy (AAG), pp. 187–200. Note that half an eye (photoreceptors, for example), part of a wing, and so forth, can be very advantageous to various creatures at certain times, even if they become less useful for future descendants. Also, compared with the eye of a bird, the human eye may be perceived as being 'half an eye'. Anthropocentrism again seems to play too large a role. Finally, the eye seems very unintelligently designed and inefficient, which is more expected on naturalism.

[304]Craig (RF), p. 161.

[305]He also misinterprets Stephen Hawking as arguing that physical necessity is "a vain hope", when his quotations of Hawking only reveal that string theory cannot provide scientists with all the answers. That does nothing to show that the physical necessity option is impossible or implausible. See ibid., p. 162. Note also the irony that Craig himself believes in a Theory of Everything, which lacks evidence: theism.

[306]The alternative in this case could be a necessary universe (this universe is necessary in all aspects), or simply a universe that necessarily permits life.

the parameters can have any values" yet makes no attempt to demonstrate this.[307] It is difficult to objectively ascertain that 'our' constants and quantities are unnecessary (or indeed, what the possible ranges may be) when the evidence conclusively demonstrates that all presently known universes (sample size of one) do indeed share these constants and quantities. The critic may wonder how the universe's contingency could possibly be demonstrated.

Interestingly, the only feasible method is currently not possible, and would increase the probability of the chance hypothesis: identifying actualised alternative universes that are not fine-tuned for intelligent or human life.[308] It seems obvious that we cannot observe a universe in which we cannot live. *This* is the only universe known to exist, and the issue of this universe's (or life-permitting universes') necessity or contingency cannot in this way be decisively settled, without begging the question. And again, it seems unusual to proclaim that the universe, which is known to exist, is not necessary, while simultaneously affirming that something or somethings not known to exist are necessary. Furthermore, as God is an unknown and unnecessary explanation, as per Ockham's Razor, the existence of a highly unlikely universe could support its being necessary.[309] Another interesting consideration is that while this universe may not be necessary *in toto*, it is necessary in allowing Craig to exist and thus, to ask the question. This alludes to the anthropic principle, which shall be discussed shortly.

As Craig has not decisively eliminated the necessity hypothesis, it is revealed that fine-tuning does not entail a god's existence. Since it is also the case that a god does not entail fine-tuning, both in that a god may not create at all or might create without fine-tuning, arguing from fine-tuning to a god or God using non-mathematical methods is fruitless.[310] Satisfied that he has comprehensively dealt with the necessity possibility, Craig moves his attention to chance hypotheses.

[307]Craig goes on to make the very strong (and fallacious) claim that "all the evidence indicates that life-prohibiting universes are not only possible but far, far more likely than any life-permitting universe". See Craig (OG), p. 113.

[308]Note that this would entail a multiverse, which could then be argued as being necessary, and again, the contingency of the multiverse cannot be demonstrated. This is a similar tactic to that employed by Craig in critiquing multiverse objections to his attempted refutation of the chance hypothesis; he claims that the hypothesised multiverse would be fine-tuned. Craig (inconsistently) uses approaches that aid him in his objections to certain alternatives, while they would hinder him concerning others.

[309]Introducing 'God' before Craig does (it is his ultimate conclusion in any case) presents no serious problems for this critique.

[310]Collins presents a Bayesian teleological argument, which shall be examined in the Bayesian analysis subsection. See Robin Collins, "The Teleological Argument: An Exploration of the Fine-Tuning of the Universe," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. Craig and Moreland (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

2.4.3 *Premise 2 – Chance*

Craig prefaces his critique of chance hypotheses with a John Barrow-influenced analogy. On a sheet of paper filled with blue dots (life-prohibitive universes) and red dots (life-permitting universes), Craig imagines a "sea of blue with only a few pin-points of red".[311] Why there are so many blue dots (the ratio of these differing universes), why they are not of the same colour (the perceptual issue), and why the dots are of the same size (referring to the inherent probability of each possibility) is left unjustified.[312] Acknowledging that there could exist constraining principles that limit the possible ranges of the universe's constants and quantities, Craig somehow asserts, with nary a calculation, that with "many variables requiring fine-tuning, the probability of a life-permitting universe's existing is still very small".[313]

Firstly, if these parameters are constrained, this universe might be very likely, or even necessary. Any descriptions of the nature and extent of these constraints would be arbitrary,[314] and a postulated lack of constraints would indicate infinitely many possibilities that would render any state of the universe almost – but not actually – impossible (including life-prohibitive universes) and effectively disallow probabilistic determinations. Secondly, Galton's problem should be kept in mind. As Victor Stenger recognised, many of the parameters are not independent; they rely on each other and could effectively reduce to only a handful of independent parameters.[315] Depending on scientific advances in the future, this could possibly reduce to one figure, paving the way for the alternative explanations for the apparent fine-tuning of the universe. This would increase the chance that the chance hypothesis is true, and could even demonstrate the necessity of the necessity hypothesis.

Thirdly, Craig seems to misunderstand probability and the allowable epistemic possibilities; for example, his perplexing indication that "we" could "run out of possible universes".[316] Even if a life-permitting universe is very improbable, given infinite time and infinite possibilities, such universes will appear, alongside life-

[311] Craig (RF), p. 164.

[312] As earlier indicated, Craig would be aided by demonstrating the existence of other universes that are not life permitting. That would confirm this universe's improbability, yet would simultaneously 'justify' its existence.

[313] Craig (RF), p. 164. Swinburne also believes in the relative improbability of this universe, but acknowledges that this cannot yet be quantified. See Swinburne (EG), p. 182.

[314] The desired extent of the constraints would no doubt differ greatly between proponents and critics of theistic design.

[315] Victor J. Stenger, *God - The Failed Hypothesis: How Science Shows that God does not Exist* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2007), pp. 148–149. Stenger further criticises teleological arguments in a later book. See Stenger (FFT). Also, the theist might suppose that tweaking one constant will inhibit life, but that might necessarily be accompanied by other tweaks, which results in another combination of constants that allows life.

[316] Craig (RF), p. 163. Note that there could be an unimaginable amount of universes so that life-permitting universes are not truly improbable, but almost unavoidable. See Andrei Linde and Vitaly Vanchurin, "How Many Universes are in the Multiverse?," *Physical Review D* 81, no. 8 (2010): 83525.

prohibitive universes, and may even appear an infinite amount of times. In fact, even when appeals to infinites are not made, the appearance of such possible universes may still occur. Prospective philosophers such as Craig will only appear in universes conducive to their existence, as per the anthropic principle, which unfortunately allows them to marvel at their seemingly improbable existence. Craig plays down the anthropic principle, noting that it does not demonstrate the high probability of such universes.[317] This is correct, though Craig ought not be so hasty in dismissing the principle altogether, as it does successfully rein in observers' amazement at the – quite necessary – conduciveness of their existence with the universe's properties.[318] While the anthropic principle may not give Craig the answer he seeks, it should have him wondering if he is asking the right question. From this it follows that Craig's perspective is what drives his fine-tuning argument, which shall be explained alongside a critique of his lottery analogies.

Craig accepts that ruminating on the improbability of a person's lottery win is unproductive, as "some individual has to win".[319] Indeed, if P(A|B) is small, it does not entail that P(B|A) is also small; the hypothesis and context around an improbable outcome need not be improbable. However, Craig then presents a virtually identical analogy, declaring that "we are not trying to explain the existence of our universe; rather it is the existence of a life-permitting universe that demands explanation", seemingly unmindful of the fact that this could improve the prospects of a chance hypothesis, though not necessarily substantially, as the probabilities are again unknown.[320] Craig's "proper lottery analogy" involves a "single red ball" engulfed by "a billion billion billion blue balls", and serves to demonstrate the incredible

[317]Craig reinforces his point with Leslie's analogy of "your" unlikely survival while being fired upon by numerous trained marksmen. This is a false analogy (for example, it is certainly improbable that all the marksmen missed, but the improbability of life-permitting universes is unknown) and a detailed refutation is unnecessary, as it is commonly accepted that the anthropic principle does not fully explain the universe or argue for the high probability of life-permitting universes. Indeed, the conditions necessary to observe fine-tuning say nothing of the causes of it. We could also ask why we ought to assume a firing squad exists at all. See Craig (RF), pp. 165–166.

[318]A related question may be, "What is life?" It may be something that, like human life, is not objectively significant. Scientists still have not been able to decisively draw a distinction between life and non-life, allowing for the possibility that such a distinction may not actually exist (as with the mind-body distinction). See Jack W. Szostak, "Attempts to Define Life Do Not Help to Understand the Origin of Life," *Journal of Biomolecular Structure and Dynamics* 29, no. 4 (2012): 599–600. The possibly illusory nature of life may also support monistic (i.e., pantheistic) models, rather than theistic or polytheistic models. This is a complex question, and the following could be considered: the confusion over whether viruses are living beings, the notion of robots developing intelligence and emotions equal to that of humans (or at least other animals), and also the possibility – perhaps best illustrated by plants transforming light and soil nutrients into 'living material' – that there is no such thing as life; all we observe is a transformation of one form of energy/matter to another.

[319]Craig (RF), p. 164.

[320]Ibid., p. 165.

improbability of the red ball rolling down the chute.[321] Firstly, this is yet another false analogy, as Craig is permitted to observe the blue balls travelling down the chute. A superior analogy would link Craig's existence to the triumphant red ball, so that the anthropic principle is pertinent once more. If a blue ball were to roll down the chute, Craig would not be there to be mystified at its seeming impossibility or to admit that his analogy is a poor one. No matter how improbable it may be that the red ball rolls down, it can happen, it only needs to happen once, and this is the only scenario Craig could observe.[322]

Secondly, it is unknown if there ought to be such an unfavourable ratio of red balls, and if all the balls have a truly equal chance of rolling down the chute. Thirdly, all these conjectures must be tempered by the fact of the enforced perceptual limitations. Limiting the focus to intelligent and/or human life may seem reasonable to the theist who presumes that their species is the primary purpose for the universe's existence, but this need not be so obvious to the non-theist.[323] The critic may wonder why the focus must be on human life, or intelligent life. They may further ask why alternative forms of life should not be considered, or indeed, forms of not-life. Perhaps the focus should be on any universe that survives beyond Planck time, or perhaps the relatively unsuccessful universes should also be included. The analogy could thus be altered, to allow for greater and greater proportions of red balls, allowing for the possibility that *all* the balls are red (similar to the necessity hypothesis). Alternatively, critics could imagine that each ball is unique, and is of a different colour, so that every ball's victory, or indeed every single event, can be said to be simultaneously unsurprising and very improbable. In either case, the sense of wonder at the red ball's supposedly overcoming the odds is lost, the overall argument is undermined, and nothing is gained by this "proper" rendering of the lottery example.

Craig then posits a multiverse scenario as the only way "that the Anthropic Principle can legitimately be employed", indicates that evidence is required "to commend itself as a plausible hypothesis", and once more depends on the work of

[321] See ibid., p. 165. Please note that due to racial sensitivities, I have replaced Craig's white and black balls with red and blue balls (as per his earlier dot analogy), respectively, similar to how I avoid exclusively referring to God as a man so that those of other genders are not unnecessarily offended. Notably, Craig eventually reverses the colours in his later work, associating the single black ball with life, and the numerous white balls with death. See Craig (OG), p. 115.

[322] Perhaps if all of the very few red balls rolled down successively, there would be more cause to be suspicious, though that too is one of many possibilities. The origin of life, even simple life, only had to happen once, whether on this planet or elsewhere in the universe. From there, Darwin's theory of evolution by way of natural selection largely explains 'complex' or 'intelligent' life. It is also possible that this universe, if oscillating, has had numerous 'attempts' at becoming life permitting. Note that most outcomes can be said to be improbable (such as that a man's mother gave birth *to him*), but it does not follow that the hypotheses they are conditioned upon must also be improbable (such as this man's mother giving birth).

[323] Craig and his peers typically place a very high (objective) value on human life; the largely inhospitable universe may not agree. To those who are not so sure of the primacy of human existence, such arguments should not be convincing at all.

Vilenkin, though the latter "seems to presuppose a static or B-Theory of time".[324] Craig focuses on the perceived limitations of *Vilenkin's* (inflationary and conveniently not backwardly-eternal) multiverse scenario, indicating that as "an infinite array of universes does not yet exist", "it may well be highly improbable that a life-permitting island universe should have occurred this soon out of the false vacuum", concluding that "the sting of fine-tuning has not been removed".[325] Craig of course merely begs the question on the probability of such life-permitting universes, and on how much time has elapsed and/or is required. Also, "the sting of fine-tuning" has certainly been lessened if God needed to create a vast multiverse just to get to our little life-conducive universe. Nevertheless, Craig overlooks alternative multiverse hypotheses, such as those indebted to David Lewis' modal realism,[326] wherein every possible universe is actualised, so that this universe is necessary after all; no universe's existence should then be surprising.[327] There may also be multiverse scenarios where 69% of possible universes are actualised, as but one example, so that chance hypotheses may be more probable than Craig thinks.[328]

Referring again to the "lack of evidence" and "speculative nature" of multiverse hypotheses, Craig reintroduces his "Boltzmann brains" problem, declaring that "we should be observing a much tinier region of disequilibrium than we do".[329] Regarding the former, this is a common and extremely counter-productive approach by theistic apologists. If only direct evidence counts, which is a clearly fallacious notion, then the God hypothesis is thrown out along with the multiverse, so that agnosticism is arrived at more quickly. And of course, there is much evidence of a

[324]He also seems to indicate his opinion that Vilenkin's model provides the "best shot" at a plausible multiverse hypothesis. See Craig (RF), pp. 166–167. Recall also that Craig is committed to the A-Theory of time.

[325]Ibid., p. 168.

[326]David K. Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986). Modal realism merged with the theory of infinite possible universes yields interesting results. Note that Craig should not necessarily reject the notion of infinite (and possibly eternal) actualised universes, given his assertions that infinity is simpler than some arbitrary finite number, at least in matters of the divine (this infinity of actualised universes could be a pantheistic god). Note that if there are indeed infinitely many universes, probabilistic reasoning may not be particularly helpful, as the chance of any such universe existing would be around zero (if infinitely many universes are merely possible), or because any improbable event happens very regularly (if the infinitely many universes are actualised). But then there will be universes where probabilistic reasoning *seems* very useful a lot of the time; we happen to be in one.

[327]Such scenarios might even me more parsimonious, as 'limitations' would not need to be explained.

[328]Any percentage is possible here. Craig might also interject, correctly, that a multiverse that includes only one life-permitting universe is itself a fine-tuned life-permitting multiverse. This claim would be vacuous, however, as such a multiverse would be 'fine-tuned' for *all* (or many) possibilities, so that the concept loses power, thus presenting no obvious challenges to chance or multiverse hypotheses. This also echoes my notion in the previous subsection, which says that a necessary multiverse might be filled with what *prima facie* appear to be unnecessary universes. Craig does make the 'fine-tuned multiverse' claim in his more recent *On Guard*. See Craig (OG), pp. 117–118.

[329]Craig (RF), p. 169.

single multiverse or omniverse, which may be a *simple* and chaotic sea of potentiality and random fluctuations that inevitably produces order on occasion.[330] Also recall that Craig is in no position to bewail speculative theories given that his theory is even more speculative, and that this affects the priors that he thinks are inscrutable.

Regarding the latter Boltzmann brains comment, Craig is simply mistaken; the world we should be observing is the one we find ourselves in, no matter its properties and likelihoods. This problem has been addressed in the previous section on the *kalām* argument, but Craig's notion that this universe ought to be smaller is worth considering. It is unclear that the (theistic) design hypothesis would be immune to this objection, as most of the universe is inhospitable to life.[331] If God created and finely-tuned the universe so that it may have a relationship with human (or intelligent) beings, who exist only in an infinitesimally tiny part of the universe and only for a fleeting, infinitesimally tiny amount of time, such a large and old universe is unnecessary and a much smaller and younger universe should be expected.[332] Hence, we now have evidence against theism. In fact, Craig has elsewhere admitted that "just as the smallness of the universe supports theism, so also the vastness of the universe supports atheism. . . the vastness of the universe increases the probability of atheism. . . the vastness of the cosmos does count against theism".[333] Indeed, God could have easily just created Earth, and mimicked our planet's heavenly lights and tidal forces with his 'magic'. Instead, God apparently set the world up in a way that can be described quite well naturalistically, without reference to God, as if he were not at all interested in revealing himself, or indeed, as if he were committed to keeping humanity ignorant about his existence.

As *Homo sapiens* is a spatially and temporally insignificant species, the philosopher might wonder why she ought to suppose that the universe is fine-tuned for humans, and why God would go to such extraordinarily unnecessary lengths to create them. Craig further claims that a small and *mostly-illusory* world is more probable, though a mostly-illusory world, especially if accompanied by an illusory god, hardly seems problematic for the critic of theism.[334] A related point would be

[330]See for example Lee Smolin, "Did the Universe Evolve?," *Classical and Quantum Gravity* 9, no. 1 (1992): 173–191.

[331]Matt Young and Paul K. Strode, *Why Evolution Works (and Creationism Fails)* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009), p. 171.

[332]This is not an endorsement of exceedingly primitive forms of Young Earth Creationism. It might also be expected that clear messages would exist on Earth or in the heavens, in lieu of the uninspiring, accidental nature of nature. Cf. Benjamin S. Cordry, "Theism and the Philosophy of Nature," *Religious Studies* 42, no. 3 (2006): 273–274. For example, God may have crafted constellations to read "God loves you", rather than having them vaguely resembling frying pans or, counter-productively, creatures of 'pagan' Greco-Roman mythology. Appropriately, mountain ranges could reveal permanent engravings of the Ten Commandments. Cf. Deuteronomy 9:10.

[333]William Lane Craig. "Does the Vastness of the Universe Support Naturalism?," accessed 11/07/2016, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/does-the-vastness-of-the-universe-support-naturalism. Note that Craig here leaves out the background information "for simplicity's sake", though it further tips the scales away from theism. Also, a similar point could be made about the unnecessarily low – but still non-zero – entropy of the initial state of the universe.

[334]Craig (OG), p. 119.

life's origins from non-life, abiogenesis. Seemingly chaotic and random events, occurring over a long time, in a very vast universe or multiverse, producing life, seems more in line with naturalism, than with theism, where God could have created life with the click of his immaterial fingers. Craig then hinders his case by again suggesting that in a multiverse, universes (or events) involving "horses popping into and out of existence", "perpetual motion machines", and "Boltzmann brains" ought to be "observed by us", which does not follow, as we happen to find ourselves in a universe that seemingly precludes such things.[335] It is unreasonable for Craig to expect to observe all manner of possibilities, some of which may be impossible, when he exists in one small section of only *one* possible universe; the limitations of which are unknown and perhaps unknowable.

Content with his case thus far, Craig oddly insists that "On atheism, at least, it is therefore highly probable that there is no World Ensemble", suggests without proper warrant that "the alternative of chance stands or falls with the Many Worlds Hypothesis", and concludes that as "the fine-tuning of the universe is plausibly due neither to physical necessity or chance", it must be "due to design, unless the design hypothesis can be shown to be even more implausible than its competitors".[336] Given Craig's demand of proof for the alternatives, it is to be expected that he present an outstanding evidential case for intelligent design. Unfortunately, Craig devotes less than two pages to his preferred hypothesis in *Reasonable Faith*, almost all of which is a critique of an unsophisticated argument presented by noted *biologist* Richard Dawkins.[337]

2.4.4 Premise 2 – Intelligent Design

Craig immediately equates "the design hypothesis" with a "Cosmic Designer" who acts as a "personal explanation of the fine-tuning of the universe", to whom detractors might object as being "unexplained".[338] In fact, perhaps to conceal the lack of evidence for his preferred explanans, Craig devotes essentially all of his case

[335]Craig (RF), pp. 169–170.

[336]Ibid., p. 170. Craig also makes the surprising claim that "to be rationally acceptable, the many worlds hypothesis needs God". See Craig (OG), p. 120.

[337]This is not a slight on Dawkins, but a comment on his fields of expertise. While it is fashionable for the intelligentsia to heavily criticise Dawkins, I do not join the bandwagon, and even commend his efforts in promoting 'atheist pride'. He says, "Being an atheist is nothing to be apologetic about. On the contrary, it is something to be proud of, standing tall to face the far horizon, for atheism nearly always indicates a healthy independence of mind and, indeed, a healthy mind. There are many people who know, in their heart of hearts, that they are atheists, but dare not admit it to their families or even, in some cases, to themselves. Partly, this is because the very word 'atheist' has been assiduously built up as a terrible and frightening label." See Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Bantam, 2006), pp. 3–4.

[338]Craig (RF), p. 170.

for the design hypothesis to just such an objection, as formulated by Richard Dawkins – who is not a professional philosopher or specialist scholar of religion – in his popular book, *The God Delusion*.[339] While Dawkins' unimpressive argument somehow concludes with God's improbability, the (relatively)[340] relevant premise concerns "the larger problem of who designed the designer". It is worth noting that while Craig earlier argued for God's aseity, that he is the uncaused cause, Craig does not actually claim this teleological argument as an argument for an undesigned designer. Now Craig claims that, "in order to recognize that intelligent design is the best explanation of the appearance of design in the universe, one needn't be able to explain the Designer".[341] While technically correct, it is all too easy to posit *any* hypothesis that comfortably explains the evidence without restraint concerning prior probabilities. Craig also asserts that Dawkins is wrong to affirm that "no explanatory advance is made" because "the Designer is just as complex as the thing to be explained", himself opining that "God is a remarkably simple entity".[342] These points are easily contested, but doing so at length, particularly at present, would be unrewarding. It is Craig's evidence for the design hypothesis that is desired, or at least some justification for his opinion that design is the more plausible option, so that it does not simply win by default.[343]

While the possibilities of necessity and chance were dismissed due to a lack of evidence, Craig offers no evidence of design. As earlier indicated, perhaps we should expect to find some direct and unambiguous evidence of design such as the Hebrew characters for God/Yahweh (יהוה) embedded in the – now appropriately named – 'god particle'. It is also not unreasonable to think that God could have taken a

[339]Ibid., p. 170; Dawkins (GD), pp. 157–158. Craig continues to avoid presenting a positive case for design, instead preferring to criticise Dawkins, in his later work. See Craig (OG), pp. 120–123.

[340]This is supposed to be a case for design, not a case for the inadequacy of an irrelevant argument presented by a non-expert. Craig's misguided attempt to pick low-hanging fruit is regrettable. Perhaps Craig perceives Dawkins, on account of his fame, as being some authority figure for all who might disagree with his arguments (though some of those are Christian theists). He also criticises Dawkins' handling of the ontological argument. See Craig (RF), p. 183.

[341]Ibid., p. 171. Craig seems to apply this principle inconsistently, asserting that the possible multiverse – an explanation for the universe – itself would be fine-tuned, indicating that it too needs an explanation.

[342]Ibid., p. 171.

[343]The reader might suppose that his second comment on Dawkins' objection is relevant to the plausibility of the design hypothesis, though Craig himself acknowledges that this "raises all sorts of questions about the role played by simplicity in assessing competing explanations" (which would have served him well in his previous arguments), imploring the reader to "leave those questions aside". See ibid., p. 171. On p. 172, Craig again makes clear that he is not in this case arguing for his hypothesis' plausibility, saying that, "postulating a divine mind behind the universe most definitely does represent an advance in simplicity, *for whatever that is worth*". Emphasis mine. Contrary to his earlier claims, Craig asserts that simplicity may not be particularly important when assessing competing theories. See Craig (OG), p. 123.

'selfie', for our benefit.[344] This is not flippant, nor is there exaggeration here over Craig's failure to provide any evidence of design. Being omnipotent, God can easily and effortlessly do such things, and more. God could have made his existence as obvious as – even more obvious than – the Sun's.[345] Immediately proceeding the distasteful discussion about Dawkins' critique is Craig's conclusion for his sections on the design hypothesis and his teleological argument:

> It seems to me therefore that of the three proffered alternatives – physical necessity, chance, or design – the most plausible of the three is the hypothesis of design. Thus, the teleological argument based on the fine-tuning of the universe fares well as a sound and persuasive argument for a Designer of the cosmos.[346]

Again, without exaggeration, Craig's section on design focussed on misinterpreting and critiquing an irrelevant, unsophisticated, and ill-thought objection presented by a non-expert. Needless to say, such tactics are uncharacteristic of a professional philosopher.[347] Despite dismissing the alternatives to intelligent design due to a lack of evidence, Craig saw no need to present any evidence for his preferred design hypothesis. This is a damning point, so for completeness, I confirm that this is Craig's approach elsewhere, including his more scholarly work, his website, and his *Defenders* apologetics class, where he spends a few hours discussing the teleological argument; in all these, Craig fails to provide evidence for design, and simply relies on the lack of evidence for the other explanantia.[348] And while Craig saw the alternatives as being implausible, he offered no statistics or calculations to support his implied assumption that design is the most plausible option of all. Notably, Craig could have rearranged the – arbitrary – order of his presented options in his first premise so that design appeared first or second, meaning that he could conclude, on the basis of a lack of evidence for the antecedent

[344]Those pointing to the lack of cameras at the time ought to remind themselves that the posited designer just created the entire universe. Related comments could be made about video recordings of Jesus' miracles and the like. Such evidence would be particularly impressive, if available before humans had invented video. Similarly, I am not the first to notice that the biblical texts seem only to be aware of technologies and facts that were commonly employed and known at the time.

[345]Of course, many religious adherents believe that the Sun is divine. They would probably not be theists, however.

[346]Craig (RF), p. 172.

[347]This is all the more surprising given Craig's mentioning of Dawkins' "lack of philosophical depth", and his indication that Dawkins presents what may be the worst atheistic argument. See Craig (OG), pp. 121, 123.

[348]William Lane Craig, "The Teleological Argument and the Anthropic Principle," in *The Logic of Rational Theism: Exploratory Essays*, ed. William Lane Craig and Mark S. McLeod, *Problems in Contemporary Philosophy* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), pp. 127–153; William Lane Craig. "Transcript: Fine Tuning Argument," accessed 17/08/2016, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/transcript-fine-tuning-argument; William Lane Craig. "Excursus on Natural Theology Part 17: The Teleological Argument Part 4," accessed 17/08/2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vigLbIn4qAA. Dawkins is again focussed on in the latter reference.

options, that the third option (necessity or chance), or even a possible fourth option (such as polytheistic design) is most likely.[349]

Furthermore, dismissing possibilities due to a lack of evidence is inappropriate for a non-mathematical approach; Craig ought to eliminate all alternatives by demonstrating their logical incoherence. On an evidentialist and probabilistic approach, Craig's argument suffers from the problem of under-determination, which is further compounded by the inherent implausibility of his theism, which also must compete with innumerable alternative god-conceptions. Naturalistic and supernaturalistic alternatives might even better explain the apparent fine-tuning of the universe, as the Bayesian analysis shall reveal.

2.4.5 Bayesian Analysis

Though Craig's teleological argument is not explicitly Bayesian, it does make probabilistic claims, so can be analysed as such. Problems abound, such as the fact that the options outlined in (1) are not exhaustive, may not be exclusive, and yields the now-familiar problem of under-determination. Without sufficient background knowledge, prior probabilities cannot be ascertained, and the probabilities of the design, intelligent design, or specifically theistic design hypotheses, cannot thus be ascertained. Furthermore, the theistic-specific hypothesis would suffer from the now equally familiar problem of theism's inherent implausibility (problem of nothing, problem of mind) and its uncountably many and possibly more plausible alternatives (polytheisms, alternative monotheisms, pantheisms). The theist might object that polytheistic hypotheses would be untenable due to the inconsistency that would result in the designed object. That does not follow, as the polytheistic gods may cooperate, sharing the same vision, or act democratically (or indeed, dictatorially). They might even be in charge of different regions, a notion that may find precedence in the Bible.[350] There might be different gods designing different countries, planets, galaxies, or universes in a greater multiverse, explaining why the world is not uniform. Furthermore, it is easy to imagine that there are indeed inconsistencies in the design, boosted by the possibility of other universes that may rely on alternative laws and/or constants.

The alternative monotheistic concept of deism would help explain God's seeming disappearance. Pantheistic variants such as pandeism may also better explain why the proposed Designer, also lacking in evidence, is never encountered, as that god

[349]Craig interestingly quotes Aristotle in commenting that the grandeur of the world indicated the "handiwork of the *gods*". See Craig (RF), p. 101. Emphasis mine.

[350]In the Septuagint, it appears that there are seventy gods to rule over seventy nations, with one of the gods being Yahweh, the god later associated with Christian theism. See Deuteronomy 32:8–9. William Paley's 'watch-maker argument' also allowed for polytheistic scenarios: "there must have existed, at some time, and at some place or other, an artificer *or artificers*". See Paley and Ferré (NTS), p. 4. Emphasis mine.

would have ceased to exist at the time of creation. Certain pantheistic, morally-indifferent, dilettante, or chaos-loving gods would also be more compatible with the theory of the chaotic singularity (which also supports the chance hypothesis), than the theistic god, and would better explain the seemingly unnecessary vastness and age of the universe, as well as its great hostility to human life. The universe does allow for life, but that it is overwhelmingly hostile, with life only allowable in one (that we are aware of) small pocket, seems more expected on naturalism or other alternatives to theism, where such life is an 'afterthought' for the universe. In fact, the unnecessary vastness of the universe seems to further support the naturalistic chance hypothesis that Craig so easily dismissed, since such vastness could well be required for such a supposedly improbable event to occur, particularly if we extend such thinking to the unnecessary vastness of the multiverse, though this would be less expected on theism. Regarding the evidence of the unnecessary vastness of the universe, Craig already admits that it lowers theism's probability.

There are many other evidences that indicate such 'bad design', and thus work against the notion of intelligent design.[351] Such instances imply that purely naturalistic (such as evolutionary) forces are at work, and include the excessively long laryngeal nerves in giraffes; the inefficiencies of the male urinary system (commonly leading to issues with the prostate); the oddity that male humans – unlike male mice – have vestigial nipples; the often painful fact that many humans need teeth removed; and many people's tendency towards high calorie foods and overeating. Another intriguing example is the very large size of human penises and glans penes, relative to those of other primates, which is better explained by a naturalistic world where gang rape is quite common,[352] rather than a world created by a god that is very much against polyandry.[353] Such phenomena – also including the geographical distribution of species and the temporal and spatial distribution of fossils – are perfectly explained by alternatives to intelligent design, such as a naturalistic Darwinian evolution. For example, as human brains and skulls grew, jaws became smaller, resulting in less room for teeth. Consider also how we do not have a whole number of days in a year, or in a month, which is especially surprising if the relevant holy texts prescribe festivals and feasts. It is as if the world was not designed by an intelligent being.

As with the previous arguments, God's intentions are of great import. Oppy declares that on the hypothesis of an intelligent designer of the universe, "it is not clear to me that there is very much that one can conclude about the kind of universe that the designer is likely to produce".[354] If the perfect and transcendent god is

[351]Tooley discusses numerous aspects of 'bad design' relating to pain sensations, such as not deactivating when the subject is alerted to bodily damage, and not activating in certain life-threatening instances. See Alvin Plantinga and Michael Tooley, *Knowledge of God* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), pp. 111–112.

[352]See, for example, Gordon G. Gallup, Rebecca L. Burch, and Tracy J. Berene Mitchell, "Semen displacement as a sperm competition strategy," *Human Nature* 17, no. 3 (2006): 253–264.

[353]Cf. Leviticus 20:10, Deuteronomy 22:22, Romans 7:2–3, and Quran 4:24.

[354]Oppy (AAG), p. 207.

perfectly content without creating, then the probability of *e* (the existence of a fine-tuned universe), given the existence of that god, is zero. Even if the probability of *e* on chance (as but one example of an alternative) is an extraordinarily small non-zero number, then the chance hypothesis better explains *e*. It is of course unknown, but if god would want to create, God may wish to create a much more efficient universe – if human relations were indeed his ultimate aim – or perhaps God would wish to demonstrate her power by sustaining human life without fine-tuning the universe for this purpose.[355]

In fact, while the probability of God's existence, or non-existence, from the evidence of fine-tuning cannot decisively be established via Bayesian calculation due to the lack of reliable prior probabilities, it can be approximated, and in a way that works against theism, as argued by Sober, Ikeda, and Jefferys.[356] With priors for both the naturalistic and theistic hypotheses being set at 0.5, which is – absurdly, especially given that theism is only one of the many supernaturalistic options – generous to theism, the key figures are the probability of *e* (evidence that the universe is fine-tuned for our existence) given *h* (God does not exist, or naturalism) and *b* (the background knowledge, which includes the fact that we, and the universe, exist), and *e* given ~*h* (God does exist, or theism) and *b*. Despite the background knowledge being generally inscrutable and/or lacking for both hypotheses, the Craigian theist may wish to claim that *P(e|h.b)* should be virtually 0%.

Actually, while background knowledge and evidence is generally lacking, there is one vital piece of information that can (and as this is a Bayesian calculation, *must*) be included: the fact of human existence; this is placed into *b*. We do not sit in an epistemological void, waiting to see what sort of universes will be generated; we know that we exist, and it is because we exist that we observe that the universe is fine-tuned in the first place.[357] Not only is this important evidence or background knowledge that must be utilised, otherwise we are no longer arguing in a Bayesian

[355]Given the minuscule space and time that the human species occupies, it could be argued that human life is certainty not the universe's most pressing concern. Indeed, much of the universe is inhospitable to human life, so that it may be supposed that it is fine-tuned for human death. Furthermore, there are numerous extinct species in the evolutionary history of *Homo sapiens*. This inefficiency may be unlikely if a Designer intended for humans to live, but would be exactly what is expected if human life were not such a great objective. The same can be said for instances of 'poor design'. Despite these concerns, the universe does indeed permit human life, and is thusly 'fine-tuned'. Though it is also 'fine-tuned' for the existence of faeces, so that the concept of fine-tuning becomes less awe-inspiring.

[356]Elliott Sober, "The Design Argument," in *The Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. William Mann (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005); Michael Ikeda and William H. Jefferys, "The Anthropic Principle Does Not Support Supernaturalism," in *The Improbability of God*, ed. Michael Martin and Ricki Monnier (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2006); Elliott Sober, "Absence of evidence and evidence of absence: evidential transitivity in connection with fossils, fishing, fine-tuning, and firing squads," *Philosophical Studies* 143, no. 1 (2009): 63–90.

[357]Note also that if the theist may wish to overlook this vital piece of background evidence it becomes enormously difficult to assert that God would and/or did fine-tune the universe for human life, so that the entire argument is undermined.

fashion, but it is the explanandum. Hence, *P(e|h.b)* is actually 100%. This may be startling to the theist, but without some god/s, humans simply could not have come about, if not for a fine-tuned universe that is life-conducive. Also recall the anthropic principle. No matter the prior, which is what the theist can then dispute about, we can in the naturalistic scenario only see the universe that we expect to see; one that has been naturally fine-tuned. If, as the typical theist might suspect, *P(e|~h.b)* is also 100%, they reach an impasse.

Both hypotheses thus seem equally likely. However, *P(e|~h.b)* cannot be as high as 100%, as God is omnipotent and some allowance must be made for the possibility that God sustains human life, in the absence of a universe that has been similarly fine-tuned. God would surely not be constrained by mere physical constants, and works in 'mysterious ways' besides.[358] In this way, fine-tuning arguments can be made to argue *against* God's existence.[359] To the arguments of Sober, Ikeda, and Jefferys, I add that the Jewish or Christian theist cannot but acknowledge the plausibility of this argument, as to deny that God could sustain human life without this sort of fine-tuning seems to be blasphemy, and contradicts the Judeo-Christian Bible, which often has God allowing his people to survive even when the conditions are life-prohibitive.[360]

We might also hope or expect that God intentionally avoids what is so easily perceived as being a purely naturalistic method, in order to eventually convince prospective followers of his grandness. So the theist should perhaps abandon the argument from fine-tuning and instead try to argue from the lack of fine-tuning. Craig could not dispute this background information, or the nature of the formulated hypotheses, though the latter deserves highlighting. Of great importance to Bayesian calculations is not only the data fed into such calculations, but also the

[358]Isaiah 28:21, 55:8, Mark 4:26–29.

[359]The theistic critic might then declare that we would not know if the universe was fine-tuned or not; maybe it really is all held together by God's 'magic'. Firstly, this appears to be a devastating and counter-intuitive retreat, as the overall argument would be undermined, on account of its assumption of fine-tuning. If not, perhaps because I falsely equate 'fine-tuning' with 'physical fine-tuning' or 'natural fine-tuning', but note that we are unable to distinguish between the latter option/s and 'magic'. Also, referring to 'magic' is certainly begging the question in favour of supernaturalism. This also wreaks havoc with the first premise since we would have the incoherent notion of naturalistic options explaining supernaturalistic 'fine tuning'. At best for the theist, we can retreat a step and say that both hypotheses are equally likely; the fine-tuning argument is still unhelpful to the theist. Secondly, my point could be ontological, not epistemological, so may not be dependant on our knowing or observing that the universe is or is not fine-tuned, so that my argument might only need minor tweaking in this case. Nevertheless, both contentions seem reasonable. If we exist and God does not, natural fine-tuning must have occurred. If we exist and God also exists, it is not a given that such fine-tuning occurred. There is also the possibility that God obscures the evidence of the 'magic hypothesis' and intends to deceive us, but that hardly looks like (the all-good) God anymore.

[360]God supposedly sustained the lives of Jonah, and Daniel's associates (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego), despite them being in environments (digestive acid and fire, respectively) inhospitable to human life. See Jonah 1:17-3:1, Daniel 3:19–28. Consider also that Heaven would likely not rely on the sort of natural fine-tuning we observe in the universe.

very nature of the questions being asked. For example, it would be all too easy to declare (without warrant, however) that God must create oak trees, so that the existence of this world and its oak trees is highly conducive to the theistic hypothesis, and perhaps not so with a chance hypothesis, wherein oak trees may not have evolved. Nevertheless, with these determinations made, and human primacy charitably assumed, a Bayesian approximation is possible:

$$P(h|e.b) = \frac{P(h|b) \times P(e|h.b)}{[P(h|b) \times P(e|h.b)] + [P(\sim h|b) \times P(e| \sim h.b)]}$$

Let *h* be 'God does not exist' and ~*h* be 'God does exist'. Due to inadequate background knowledge, the priors *P(h|b)* and *P(~h|b)* shall be set at 0.5. As explained, *P(e|h.b)* must be 1 and *P(e|~h.b)* must be smaller than 1, and is charitably set at 0.999.[361]

$$P(h|e.b) = \frac{0.5 \times 1}{[0.5 \times 1] + [0.5 \times 0.999]}$$

$$P(h|e.b) = 0.5003$$

And thus, even when being generous to theism, concerning the evidence of fine-tuning, 'God does not exist' is more probable than not. In sum, while focussing on the likelihoods alone, natural fine-tuning can not at all be considered evidence for God's existence. Every possible godless universe that we or other observers could observe will be naturally fine-tuned for our/their existence. As if the resulting agnosticism were not enough, a universe created by God does not need fine-tuning, so that fine-tuning is actually – even if slight – evidence against God/s existence. As turning the argument from fine-tuning on its head is very counter-intuitive, more clarification is necessary.

Concerning the likelihoods, that $P(e|h.b) = 1$ and $P(e|\sim h.b) < 1$ cannot reasonably be denied. Keep in mind that the likelihoods do not say that we observe *e* on both theories, and so should give up. They tell us how expected *e* is given the background knowledge and the truth of the hypotheses. Due to an observational selection effect, the evidence of fine-tuning would reasonably be observed on both theories. So the weak anthropic principle is very relevant after all. Observing fine-tuning tells us nothing about why the universe is fine-tuned. However, God has other

[361] Arguing along similar lines, Kelly Clark is far less charitable, seemingly claiming that *P(e|~h.b)*, despite *b* kindly including the knowledge of God's intentions to create persons, is effectively zero. Indeed, as God could have created the universe with *any* values for the constants, theism seems to explain no better than naturalism, the seeming improbability of the fact that the universe's constants and quantities are set at the values they are. See Kelly James Clark, "The Explanatory Power of Theism," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 25, no. 3 (1989), p. 134. Note that if the existing god lacks the intention to create humans, or rather, specifically wishes to avoid creating human or intelligent life, *P(e|~h.b)* will be exactly zero. The unknowable intentions of the divine are clearly of great import, as it would appear impossible to argue for supernaturalism or theism in a probabilistic manner.

options bedsides fine-tuning. Now what the typical theistic apologist actually tries to argue for is that *P(e|h)* is very small, erroneously assuming from this that *P(h|e)* is very small.[362] There are numerous problems with this.

Formally, the former does not necessitate the latter. These probabilities also do not feature in the calculation, so that we are obviously asking different questions. The theist may wish to ignore *b*, though that is even more problematic; we have *b*, so the probabilities must be conditioned on *b*. But we also do not know that *P(e|h)* is very small, or more relevantly, that it is smaller than *P(e|~h)*. If *~h* refers to supernaturalism, then *P(e|~h)* is a complete unknown. If ~h refers to theism, we still cannot assume that it is relatively high, since God has other options, and is supposedly inscrutable. In fact, naturalism as a catch-all hypothesis may have the edge here as well, since certain naturalistic hypotheses – like those revolving around determinism and/or the multiverse – would result in *P(e|h)* being 1, while *P(e|~h)* must < 1 since there are various god options and even the theistic god would not necessarily employ such fine-tuning. So this is a non-starter; the theist cannot in this way tilt the priors in theism's favour. With all these unknowns, I invoked the principle of indifference, which yields equal priors; this is actually charitable to supernaturalism and especially to theism. The only thing we can be certain of, my comments about naturalistic determinism and multiverses notwithstanding, is that *P(e|h.b)* = 1 and *P(e|~h.b)* < 1, which means that the evidence of fine-tuning works better as an argument against God's existence.

This ironically leads to the conclusion that it is not the evidence of fine-tuning that theists should utilise in arguing for God's existence. Fine-tuning works on both hypotheses, so that maybe a substantial point of difference should be sought. It does seem counter-productive for God to do things in a way that is perfectly consistent with how things would be done in a godless universe, and for theistic philosophers to argue likewise. It is as if God does not want us to know that he exists. As with miracles, it should be expected that God reveal his power and even his existence by his violating, or at least seemingly violating, the laws of nature.[363] Theists should instead, as indicated by Ikeda and Jefferys, consider the merits of arguing that the *lack* of fine-tuning is proof of God's existence. That would indeed be a proper *modus tollens* proof:

(1) If we exist in a godless universe, it must have been fine-tuned.
(2) We exist in a universe that is not fine-tuned.
(3) Therefore, our universe is not godless.

[362] Note that in this paragraph *e* could be replaced with *b*, depending on whether the theist focuses on the evidence of the fine-tuned universe or on the fact that we exist in a life-permitting universe, which are not equivalent.

[363] And just as with miracles, observers might be unsure if something unnatural really did occur. The woes of arguing for God in a scientific and probabilistic fashion.

Humans existing despite the lack of fine-tuning is completely antithetical to naturalism, so that if (2) were true, it would be reasonable to assume God's existence.[364] This recalls other instances where science has caused the god of the gaps to shrink. Before we knew of fine-tuning, we may have considered our existence inexplicable without God; not so much now that we are aware of the evidence of fine-tuning.

Despite the negative result for theism, even without positing a multiverse and the like, my calculation is actually very charitable; we ought to factor in the priors. God's existence was earlier explained as being highly improbable for a great number of reasons, so that *P(~h|b)* and *P(e|~h.b)* should be miniscule, particularly if God truly prefers to sustain human existence without such fine-tuning, and *P(h|b)* would also be much larger. Also given the problem of alternative god-conceptions, *P(~h|e.b)* seemingly approaches 0. One reason is that many possible supernaturalisms involve gods that do not want to fine-tune the universe for life or human existence. For a mere C-inductive argument for God's existence (the lack of background knowledge renders precise probabilistic determinations impossible), *~h* must be more probable given the evidence, *e*, rather than just on the background knowledge, *b*. The relevance condition must thus be satisfied, that is that *e* is more probable on *~h*, than on *b* alone. Given that *b* is very much incomplete and *e* would, in fact, be relatively less probable on *~h*, even such a modest teleological argument is a complete failure. The sort of fine-tuning we observe does not necessitate God's existence and God's existence certainly does not necessitate this sort of fine-tuning.

Craig claims that Robin Collins employs Bayes' Theorem to argue that *e* given *~h* is more probable, which contradicts my calculations.[365] Collins himself makes it easy for critics to identify where he went wrong, if I may be so presumptuous, so that a thorough critique of his verbose argument is unnecessary:

> Further, as much as possible, I shall avoid using theories of confirmation that attempt to account for everyday and scientific forms of reasoning but whose claims go significantly beyond what these forms of reasoning demand. Thus, for instance, I will avoid appealing to *prior* probabilities and to notions of purely logical probability that claim that relations of probability exist completely independently of human cognizers.[366]

What Collins admits on the second page of his essay, ensures that the Bayesian need not turn to the third. That Collins fails to properly incorporate key background information such as the inherent implausibility of God's existence, the infinitely-

[364] As mentioned before, at this stage, the theist could object that we could not decide whether our existence is due to natural fine-tuning or God's magic. Of course, that means that neither side can appeal to fine-tuning, or the lack thereof. However, it does seem that the *appearance* of natural fine-tuning should still count against God's existence, as God would surely not be expected to make it harder for her creations to believe in her.

[365] Craig (RF), p. 160. Craig actually edited the essay. See Robin Collins, "The Teleological Argument: An Exploration of the Fine-Tuning of the Universe," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. Craig and Moreland (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 202–281.

[366] Robin Collins, "The Teleological Argument: An Exploration of the Fine-Tuning of the Universe," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. Craig and Moreland (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 203.

many rivals to theism, and perhaps also the fact of human existence, is no small matter; his calculations are clearly not Bayesian.[367] Bayesian reasoning is supposed to incorporate all the available evidence, yet his data is scant and his set of examined hypotheses is not comprehensive.[368] Furthermore, whether it is Craig's or Collins' argument that is analysed, it is ad hoc to suppose that fine-tuning for intelligent life, at least of the sort we observe, is indeed more likely if some god does exist.[369] This would assume the very thing the argument intended to prove, that there is a god who wants to create a world in which humans can flourish, a world that happens to look like what a naturalistic world would look like, with all its imperfections and inefficiencies.

To obtain good answers with Bayes' Theorem, the mathematician must ask the right questions, and must be wary of the GIGO principle.[370] Thorough Bayesian

[367]He presents, at best, a mere likelihood argument, which cannot speak to how probable is the truth of theism. See ibid., p. 206.

[368]For a more thorough critique of Collins' argument – from a fellow Christian philosopher – see Mark Douglas Saward, "Collins' core fine-tuning argument," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 76, no. 2 (2014): 209–222.

[369]We just do not know that other non-human universes are possible, that there is not a modal realism type multiverse so that our little humanophilic universe is necessitated, and so forth. Furthermore, we cannot know that 'godly' universes would yield such fine-tuning; this would be ad hoc. So for that question, we cannot decide between the options. Both Craig and Collins understand the limitations of ad hoc hypotheses. See Craig (RF), pp. 132, 188, 233; Robin Collins, "The Teleological Argument: An Exploration of the Fine-Tuning of the Universe," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. Craig and Moreland (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 206. While Collins here admits that independent motivations (apart from the confirming data, *e*) are needed in formulating a non-ad hoc hypothesis, he offers no convincing independent motivations for the probability of theism or the notion that an existing god would create, fine-tune, and so forth. Nor does Craig. Note also how I am being careful in describing 'this sort of fine-tuning'. This is because theists could claim the 'magic' approach as a type of fine-tuning. I am perhaps overly cautious, since Craig did appeal to physical constants, so that a 'magic' approach would nullify his argument in assuming that which it is supposed to prove, and necessitate a new – questing-begging – one. e.g., The Argument from the Miracle That Humans Exist despite the Universe's Physical Constants Being Life-Prohibitive. As explained earlier, however, that may actually be a more fruitful approach.

[370]When restricting the evidence to be considered, and evaluating an ad hoc hypothesis that perfectly predicts such evidence, it should not be a surprise that the hypothesis would appear very probable, post-calculations. This is not in the spirit of Bayesian reasoning, and is ultimately futile, due to the necessary acceptance of a higher inherent implausibility. Note also that many other philosophers endorse Bayesian reasoning, though they do not always know how to use it correctly. For example, philosopher John Hawthorne argued inexplicably against the notion that absence of evidence could be used as evidence that affects the probability calculation, despite this effectively being entailed by the use of likelihoods in Bayesian reasoning, and despite him actually proving the point with one of his own calculations (he used the absence of evidence to change odds of 50:50 to 40:60). See John Hawthorne. "Reflections on Fine-Tuning," accessed 30/06/2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=3Gl_w1yMgCg. I can allow that he meant only that the notion would not necessarily be conclusive proof, which would be correct, though that is not what he expressed, and this would be a redundant point given that he is already endorsing Bayesian probability theory.

calculations are thus far looking impossible for theistic arguments, and when they may be applied on the acceptance of very limited background knowledge, they seem to largely disprove theism.

2.4.6 Conclusion

Craig's disjunctive teleological argument could only be successful if it comprehensively ruled out all alternatives to intelligent design, or at least demonstrated that intelligent design was the more probable option. It succeeds in doing neither. The argument fails to demonstrate God's existence, or make it more probable. Indeed, probabilistic analyses revealed that this argument fails to overcome the critical problems with theism raised in previous arguments, but also that fine-tuning may actually be more probable if God does not exist. Fine-tuning is compossible with a godless universe (and must be present, if humans exist); but with God, would not necessarily obtain. Considerations on the self-centredness of the human species and the impact of perception may constrain the 'surprise' that the universe is life-permitting. Also, while a successful design argument was always going to be unlikely in the wake of the failed cosmological arguments, it is doubtful that, given successful cosmological arguments, such teleological arguments would add anything very substantial to the case for theism.[371] Finally, Craig's admission that the vastness of the universe is more likely on 'atheism' than 'theism' leads to a related and effective argument against God's existence, and makes it even clearer that Craig ought to provide transparent probabilistic analyses.

2.5 The Axiological Argument

Due to the perceived importance of Craig's first three arguments, including the crucial *kalām* argument for which he is best known, significant effort was devoted to their analyses. The next three arguments in Craig's cumulative case shall be examined more swiftly, partly due to his more scant treatment of them, with the first being very obviously question-begging and circular, the second easily identified as fallacious and rejected as a proof of God by its originator, and the third "isn't really

[371] As Monton indicated, if it was known that God *created* the universe for human life, it would seem unavoidable that he *designed* (via natural fine-tuning or supernatural methods) it to allow human life. See Bradley Monton, "God, Fine-Tuning, and the Problem of Old Evidence," *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 57, no. 2 (2006): 421. Note also that if the universe is eternal, as in oscillating universe models, some sort of cosmological natural selection could occur, and there would thus be no need to postulate intelligent design. Cf. Lee Smolin, "Did the Universe Evolve?," *Classical and Quantum Gravity* 9, no. 1 (1992): 173–191.

an argument for God's existence".[372] This section deals with the first, Craig's argument from objective morality to God. Craig begins with his usual survey of previous thinkers, briefly referring to Aquinas' Fourth Way and concluding with a longer discussion of William Sorley's ideas on morality, which seem to have greatly influenced Craig's formulation.[373] Craig appears convinced by Sorley's 'refutation' of a monistic view of morality, compatible with certain forms of pantheism, in favour of a theistic view, as the monistic view supposedly "leaves no room for purposeful endeavor or real freedom. . . everything simply is as it is".[374] Craig's own axiological argument is formulated thusly:

(1) If God does not exist, objective moral values and duties do not exist.
(2) Objective moral values and duties do exist.
(3) Therefore, God exists.[375]

This is a simple and logically valid syllogism whereby denying the consequent (*modus tollens*) infers God's existence. Unfortunately, both premises are highly controversial. Furthermore, Craig immediately indicates a limitation of the argument in that it "does not reach the conclusion that God is the basis of objective moral values and duties", which actually emerges in the defence of the first premise.[376]

2.5.1 Premise 1 – Semantics

Besides the fact that many philosophers believe in an objective morality that is independent of God's existence, premise one is problematic.[377] As indicated above, Craig understands that in (1), *Q* (the existence of God) and *P* (the existence of objective moral values and duties) occur together, but that is not to say that one causes the other, or to identify which is the causal agent. Before examining this premise more closely, a brief note on Craig's referring to objective moral values and duties is necessary. He differentiates between the two, indicating the former as referring to "something's worth" (good or bad) and the latter as referring to

[372]The latter refers to Craig's experiential argument. See William Lane Craig. "Is the Material World all there is? Arguments for the Existence of God," accessed 06/12/2013, http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2013/08/06/3819108.htm.

[373]Craig (RF), pp. 104–106.

[374]No argument is offered as to why this view is logically incoherent or even undesirable. In fact, on the previous page, Craig himself interprets Sorley as recognising that what people may desire does not indicate what is or ought to be: "In other words, just because we are not happy about some situation does not imply that the situation ought not to be". See ibid., pp. 105–106.

[375]Ibid., p. 172.

[376]Ibid., p. 172.

[377]For example, see Erik J. Wielenberg, "In Defense of Non-Natural, Non-Theistic Moral Realism," *Faith and Philosophy* 29, no. 1 (2009): 23–41.

"something's obligatoriness" (right or wrong).[378] I find this delineation unnecessary and unhelpful, insofar as analysing Craig's moral argument, so shall simply refer to the underlying and all-encompassing "objective morality".[379] The primary controversy of (1) resides with Craig's use of the term 'objective'.

Craig explains that, "To say that something is objective is to say that it is independent of what people think or perceive", while to say that something is subjective is to say that "it is dependent on what human persons think or perceive".[380] Craig possibly appeals to his audience's emotions, employing a racially charged example: "to say that the Holocaust was objectively wrong is to say that it was wrong even" if it was "universally believed that the Holocaust was right".[381] After asserting that on naturalism, humans are mere "accidental byproducts of

[378]Craig (RF), pp. 172–173.

[379]This simplification for ease of exposition does not disadvantage the argument. In fact, this move can benefit Craig, who would arguably face greater challenges in proving the existence of moral duties or obligations, particularly with regards to the second premise, as the non-theist objecting to the first premise could struggle with demonstrating objective moral duties apart from God without referring to a deterministic universe. Deontic theorising on what it is that people 'ought' do is fraught with problems. For technical treatments of the difficulties posed by deontic logic, see David Makinson, "On a Fundamental Problem of Deontic Logic," in *Norms, Logics and Information Systems: New Studies in Deontic Logic and Computer Science*, ed. Paul McNamara and Henry Prakken (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 1999), pp. 29–53; Jörg Hansen, Gabriella Pigozzi, and Leendert van der Torre, "Ten Philosophical Problems in Deontic Logic" (paper presented at the Normative Multi-agent Systems Conference, Wadern, Germany, 2007). Note also that Craig's differentiation is possibly to address the Euthyphro Dilemma, which is not of primary concern here.

[380]Once again, Craig's speciesism and human exceptionalism is revealed. Craig (RF), p. 173. Peter Singer has long spoken against speciesism, and how it is difficult to distinguish between that and sexism or racism. For example, see Peter Singer, "Why Speciesism is Wrong: A Response to Kagan," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 33, no. 1 (2016): 31–35.

[381]Craig (RF), p. 173. Note that any intended appeal to emotion could work against Craig, as his critics could produce similar examples, intending to question and disparage the morality of his Judeo-Christian god, focussing on the 'Pagan holocausts' and crimes against humanity committed on peoples such as the Canaanites, the Hittites, and the Midianites. See Deuteronomy 7:1–2, 20:16–18, Numbers 31. Interestingly, while Craig seems appalled at genocides directed *at* Israelites, he seems to approve of and defend certain genocides allegedly enacted *by* them. See William Lane Craig. "Slaughter of the Canaanites," accessed 06/11/2012, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/slaughter-of-the-canaanites. Note also that Craig's defence of the Israelite soldiers' actions, and his effectively pleading for them to be shown sympathy for the harsh actions they were forced to take, is eerily similar to the Nazi soldiers' defence against charges relating to their slaughter of innocent Jews, that they were 'only following orders'. Upon later being given the opportunity to shed his reputation as 'the apologist who defends genocide and infanticide in the Old Testament', partly by way of alternative interpretations of the relevant biblical passages, Craig instead affirms his hard-nosed and literalist approach. See William Lane Craig. "The "Slaughter" of the Canaanites Re-visited," accessed 07/01/2014, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/the-slaughter-of-the-canaanites-re-visited. Craig might counter that sceptics who deny objective morality (though sceptics can accept objective morality as shall soon be shown) cannot call God's actions or commands objectively wrong, but that says nothing of such critics labelling those actions or commands as subjectively wrong and disagreeable, and does not prevent critics appealing to the pragmatic ethic of reciprocity.

nature", a realisation which could have altered his views on fine-tuning, Craig claims that "On a naturalistic view moral values are just by-products of socio-biological evolution".[382] While evolution provides a more than ample explanation of subjective moralities,[383] it does not rule out the existence of objective morality, as Craig would agree, nor does it negate the possibility that this objective morality, God-derived or not, somehow influences human subjective moralities.

Craig here does not rule out the possibility that there is an objective morality, which exists merely as a property of the universe, such as the gravitational constant being what it is, or the specific entropic state of the universe soon after the Big Bang.[384] For example, objective morals could exist as physical constants or properties of the universe, and is perceived and reflected in humans' subjective views of morality (fully, partly, or perhaps not at all), just as the intrinsic physical properties of objects relating to the ability to absorb, transmit and reflect light, is perceived by human people as the objects having colour. As such, Craig's further doubt that human morality could be "objectively true" in a Godless universe is irrelevant, as is his unsophisticated and unnecessarily emotive assertion that "On the atheistic view, there's nothing really wrong about raping someone".[385]

Craig then correctly admonishes certain moral philosophers who, through particular methods and objections, wish to lend support to the possibility of a "Godless objective morality" (which may be species-independent), or to doubt that objective

[382]Craig seems to be accusing sceptics of making a false equivocation between human subjective morality and objective morality, when it is he who errs, in assuming that the former is the only way the latter could be actualised without God, and dismissing the possibility of a God-independent objective morality. See Craig (RF), pp. 173–175. There is also the issue raised earlier, that humans may not be the ultimate aim of God or the universe, so that a God-independent objective morality may have no relation with the human species at all. This objective morality could instead concern slugs or aliens, and the possibility that no species is aware of or has access to it must also be entertained. Craig also again fallaciously conflates naturalism with atheism. Disproving naturalism is hardly sufficient for adopting theism. Finally, evolution is not inconsistent with theism, as many contemporary theists will attest.

[383]Craig does not dispute this, though other theists might. For a brief discussion on the difficulties posed by *evolutionary altruism*, and the subsequent use of arguments from ignorance, as well as multi-level evolutionary selection theory, and the role of language and intellect on morality, see Philipse (GAS), pp. 288–290. Also, there are animals that display traces of 'human morality', despite not being human, and seemingly being irreligious. See Frans de Waal, *The Bonobo and the Atheist: In Search of Humanism Among the Primates* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2014).

[384]In a more recent piece written for the benefit of general audiences, Craig relies heavily on J. L. Mackie's *opinion* that objective morals "make the existence of a God more probable", which does not at all support the very strong first premise. See William Lane Craig. "Is the Material World all there is? Arguments for the Existence of God," accessed 06/12/2013, http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2013/08/06/3819108.htm. Relevant to (2), Mackie also said that the "claim to objectivity, however ingrained in our language and thought, is not self-validating". See J. L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 35.

[385]Craig (RF), p. 175. Note that the latter is incorrect, at least when considering that some atheists believe in an objective standard of morality.

morality exists at all, for confusing moral ontology with moral epistemology.[386] However, it would seem impossible to persuasively argue for the actual existence of a God-given objective morality, if it were not known to exist, and – especially – if God's existence was also unknown.[387] Craig continues to doubt that objective morality could exist without God, failing to rule out the possibility, whilst also failing to demonstrate that objective morality would certainly exist with God.[388] In fact, as the critiques of Craig's previous arguments revealed, God's intentions are of paramount importance and yet unknown, so that perhaps God would not be interested in creating or providing (or abiding by an independent)[389] objective morality; and alternative god-conceptions, such as forms of pantheism and deism, which are not associated with objective morality may be more plausible than Craig's theism.

Craig subsequently considers that moral principles are necessarily true, but then appears to demand an explanation, which seems confused and inconsistent, given his earlier assertions of God's existence being explained by the necessity of his being.[390] Craig then addresses the aforementioned possibility of a "Godless objective morality", labelling it "Atheistic Moral Platonism", raising three objections.[391] Firstly, Craig sees such moral values as mere abstractions, claiming that actual moral values "seem to exist as properties of persons".[392] Apart from being unconvincing, Craig's objection counter-productively describes objective morals as properties of persons – and by extension, the universe – which could demonstrate that God is not a required explanation. Craig's second objection says that Atheistic Moral Platonism leaves no

[386]Ibid., p. 176. This tactic allows Craig to avoid subjective notions of consequentialism and more unsophisticated objections, such as "but atheists often lead more moral lives than their religious counterparts" and "even believers disagree on what the objective morals are". This 'ontological-epistemological trap', however, will be used against Craig's argument throughout the remainder of this critique. Also, Craig acknowledges that non-believers may lead moral lives "that put ours to shame". See Craig (OG), p. 127. In doing so, Craig wisely avoids criticising atheists for supposedly basing their morality on 'Darwinism'. Phenomena such as 'survival of the fittest' are observed to occur in nature; not all atheists view them as being the ideal basis for modern society.

[387]It appears unreasonable to demand an explanation for something that is not known to exist. There would also be pragmatic concerns. It would seem cruel for God to have created objective morals for the benefit of human persons, without making clear to them all that objective morality exists, and what it comprises. Furthermore, the 'ontological-epistemological trap' may be a technically correct, though entirely unreasonable approach. There seems to be little basis for discussing the existence of something, and what it implies about other somethings, when the knowledge of that something's existence is impermissible, and possibly lacking.

[388]Craig (RF), pp. 176–177.

[389]This is another footnote to Plato. The Euthyphro Dilemma shall be discussed below, and derives from Plato, *Euthyphro* 10A. See Plato, G. M. A. Grube, and John A. Cooper, *Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2002), p. 12.

[390]Craig (RF), p. 178.

[391]A superior term may be 'ethical naturalism'. However, these may all refer to similar – albeit different – concepts. Platonism may refer to abstract objects, for example, while my hypothesis can involve physical moral constants. In any case, there are numerous alternatives to an objective morality that is grounded in God.

[392]Craig (RF), p. 178.

room for moral duties or obligations, though his strategy is a mere appeal to ignorance, alongside a claim that "Theism, by contrast, provides a plausible basis for moral duty".[393]

Craig's final objection is the claim that "it is fantastically improbable that just that sort of creature would emerge from the blind evolutionary process that corresponds to the abstractly existing realm of moral values".[394] As earlier indicated, it is possible that such a godless objective morality need not perfectly – or at all – align with human notions of morality,[395] with Craig possibly guilty of the same sort of faulty reasoning applied by those moral philosophers who supposedly confused moral ontology with moral epistemology.[396] Craig has fallen into his own ontological-epistemological trap. He then applauds Sorley for regarding the "natural realm" and the "moral realm" as "two entirely independent orders of reality", though that merely begs the question, just as Craig earlier assumed a distinction between the physical and the non-physical.[397] As he has done frequently thus far, Craig concludes that the alternative to his view lacks evidence and/or obvious basis:

> In short, on an atheistic, naturalistic worldview, there just seems to be no basis for affirming the existence of objective moral values and duties. Certainly we have a sense of morality, but on naturalism that sense is an illusion wrought by socio-biological conditioning.[398]

As Craig has not conclusively ruled out the possibility of objective morality without God, nor demonstrated that objective morality must be present if some god does exist, the argument already fails. I also think that a more evidentially justified form of (1) would read:[399]

(1′) If God does not exist, God-given morality does not exist.

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[393]Ibid., pp. 178–179.

[394]Ibid., p. 179.

[395]Made all the more plausible when not assuming the great importance of the human species, as discussed in the critique of Craig's teleological argument. Consider that we might live in a deterministic and uncaring universe but evolved to believe that our lives matter because those without the belief were more prone to dying childless. Similarly, we may have evolved to believe in a god, such as one that grants us with an objective standard of morality, because of its boost to our survival prospects and not because such a being does exist.

[396]Craig also declared that it is difficult to even comprehend this view. He seemed to have no difficulties in earlier accepting that there are set properties of the universe, such as the physical constants. See Craig (RF), p. 178.

[397]Ibid., p. 179. Craig further implies that the 'natural order' and the 'moral order' are on equal footing, as they both cannot be conclusively proven to exist. It would seem that appealing to uncertainty is the job of the sceptic, and not the believer. This is a poor argument indeed, particularly as the price for the sceptic (who also wishes to avoid theism) in rejecting certainty is not too great to pay. Sceptics tend to be sceptical, by definition. Cf. Craig (OG), p. 128.

[398]Craig (RF), p. 179.

[399]Note that this alteration is still acceptable even if objective morality could only be supplied by God, and could exist independently of her. Recall also that my altering of Craig's premises is not necessarily intended to improve the arguments (as they are seemingly unsalvageable), but to better reflect the state of the evidence and/or Craig's meaning.

This altered first premise seems rather obvious and insignificant, whilst also rendering the argument logically invalid. Even if (2) were true, it no longer leads to (3). If (2) were similarly altered so as to make the argument logically valid once more, Craig's hope of procuring evidence to justify his second premise vanishes. Rather than needing to complete the already-difficult task of proving the existence of *objective* morality, Craig would need to prove the existence of *God-given* morality, when it is not even known that God exists; that God exists is the conclusion of the argument, after all. It will be quite the challenge for Craig to proceed without resorting to tautological or circular reasoning, particularly with less than two pages of his *Reasonable Faith* being dedicated to this purpose.

2.5.2 Premise 2 – It Is Known

To many, Craig's second premise lacks verisimilitude. Aside from the difficulties raised immediately above, it would seem that Craig's prospects in demonstrating the existence of a supervenient, objective, or God-given morality are handicapped, especially given Craig's own warnings against confusing moral ontology with moral epistemology. As Craig understands, objective morality could exist even if we did not know it exists or what it entails. To Craig's chagrin, however, a consistent approach also reveals the obvious truism that objective morality might not exist, even if it is thought to exist. It is thus surprising that one of Craig's primary reasons for supposing that objective morality does exist is that it is simply known, as revealed in his debate with Arif Ahmed at the University of Cambridge:

> But the problem is that objective values do exist, and deep down I think we all know it. . . Hence I think we all know (2), objective values do exist.[400]

It is as if Craig thinks that the *subjective* opinions of laypeople prove the existence of *objective* morality, which is doubly odd given his own concerns about an ontological-epistemological trap. Craig also defers to the opinion of atheistic scholars (again, a favourite tactic of his), such as philosopher Michael Ruse, who claimed that "The man who says that it is morally acceptable to rape little children is

[400] Arif Ahmed and William Lane Craig, *Is Belief in God More Reasonable than Disbelief?* (La Mirada, CA: Biola University, 2005), Audio CD. Cf. "Most of us think that in moral experience we do apprehend objective values and obligations". See Craig (RF), p. 180.

just as mistaken as the man who says, 2+2=5".[401] Craig continues to claim that ethicist David Brink "thinks that the objectivity of moral values is thus the default position", when Brink does not at all argue for the existence of God-given morality.[402] But philosopher Tara Smith notes that ethicists might discuss what is known as "objective morality", without assuming intrinsicism, which is what Craig argues for, revealing his – just as with his claiming support for the universe's beginning from 'nothing' – appeal to ambiguity, or rather, his use of ambiguous claims.[403]

To aid Craig, I would think that most theistic and atheistic people would agree that it is simply wrong to torture infants solely in order to ward off boredom, with those disagreeing probably labelled, 'psychopaths'.[404] However, these appeals to the subjective and emotive opinions of laypeople and authorities, very plausibly inculcated by genetics and culture, constitute inadequate evidence for the existence of *objective* morality, no matter how widespread they may be, and it is not clear how Craig avoids being hoisted by his own petard, being caught by his own ontological-epistemological trap.[405] Unimpressed by Craig's approach in their debate, Arif Ahmed produced a scathing rebuttal:

> What is the argument? Well it was striking so I wrote it down. There are objective moral values because deep down we know there are. That's it, that's the argument. Now that may

[401]Craig here defers to Ruse as support for the existence of objective morality, despite earlier quoting him as referring to morality as "a biological adaptation" (p. 174). Craig (RF), p. 180; Michael Ruse, *Darwinism Defended: A Guide to the Evolution Controversies* (London: Addison-Wesley, 1982), p. 275. Note that Craig prefers quoting atheistic scholars in order to bolster his case, as this seemingly gives the illusion of objectivity. Recall that there are numerous Christian and theistic scholars that disagree with Craig's arguments, so that Craig's atheistic critics could do likewise. For example, Wes Morriston is unconvinced by Craig's solution to the Euthyphro Dilemma, which is discussed in its own subsection below. See Wes Morriston, "God and the Ontological Foundation of Morality," *Religious Studies* 48, no. 1 (2012): 20. Back to Ruse, the philosopher of science actually thinks that our moral norms are influenced by natural selection, and that we may even see our morality as objective because this serves as an evolutionary advantage. See Michael Ruse, "Evolutionary Ethics: A Phoenix Risen," *Zygon* 21, no. 1 (1986): 95–112.

[402]Craig (RF), p. 181; David O. Brink, "The Autonomy of Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism*, ed. Michael Martin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 149–165.

[403]Tara Smith, "The Importance of the Subject in Objective Morality: Distinguishing Objective from Intrinsic Value," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 25, no. 1 (2008): 126–148.

[404]Those who disagree, or at least do not agree, could also include people who are moral non-cognitivists, agnostics, or error-theorists. Note also that, depending on which god exists, such activity could be objectively good and right.

[405]Appeals to authority can be valid. However, as noted by philosopher of science Wesley C. Salmon, who is sometimes quoted by Craig as supporting appeals to authority, "*Authorities may express opinions about matters concerning which they could not possibly have any evidence*" and "*Authorities who are equally competent*, as far as we can tell, *may disagree*. . . Ignoring the judgment of opposed authorities is a case of biasing the evidence". Further criticising the related arguments from consensus (the consensus is perceived as being an authority), Salmon stresses the importance of directly examining the evidence. See Wesley C. Salmon, *Logic*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1984), pp. 100–101.

> pass for an argument in Talbot Theological College. It may indeed pass for an argument in the White House.[406] But this is Cambridge and that doesn't pass for an argument here.[407]

Craig has another – albeit similar – justification, however: "our moral experience" in which "we do apprehend a realm of objective moral values and duties".[408] It is unclear how this avoids the trap, since it arguably alludes to moral epistemology, and it is further doubtful that these alleged moral experiences could be plausibly differentiated from subjective notions of morality. In trying to prove the existence of objective morality that is independent of what human persons think or perceive, Craig employs the counter-intuitive and counter-productive method of directly appealing to what human persons think or perceive. Understanding the likely objection here, Craig first re-iterates his ontological-epistemological trap, though in a more verbose manner.[409] This of course does not constitute a proof of the existence of objective morality. It only allows for the possibility.

Clearly influenced by the seminal work of Alvin Plantinga, Craig then declares that there is "warrant which our moral experience gives to our moral beliefs" and that "much more must be done than hold out the possibility that naturalism may be true".[410] For "if theism is true", says Craig, "then our moral experience, even if conditioned by biology and society, is probably not wholly illusory but is reliable to some degree".[411] In other words, Craig has no convincing evidence for the existence of objective morality, attempts to shift the evidential burden, and argues in a circle. Craig needs to decide if this is a moral argument *to* God, or a moral argument *from* God, and similarly, whether he will make an argument from *moral truth* or (or also) from *moral awareness*. He concludes that God exists on the basis of the existence of objective (God-given) morality. Craig says that the existence of objective morality is alluded to by moral experience. And this moral experience is reliable, at least "to some degree", because God exists. Craig's circular and unconvincing moral argument then, could be thusly presented:

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[406] George W. Bush was President at the time.

[407] Arif Ahmed and William Lane Craig, *Is Belief in God More Reasonable than Disbelief?* (La Mirada, CA: Biola University, 2005), Audio CD. Incidentally, this drew rare applause and laughter from the typically reserved Cambridge audience.

[408] Craig (RF), pp. 179–180. Craig feels that as sensory experience points to the objective reality of the physical world, so too does moral experience point to the objective reality of morality, despite the fact that moral experience is not as well described and understood. He also employs the notion that "moral values are gradually discovered, not invented", which, in the case of objective morals, and amongst other problems, merely assumes that humans would discover them.

[409] Ibid., pp. 179–180.

[410] Ibid., p. 180. As explained above, naturalists are not actually required to eschew necessity and objective or necessarily moral truths. In particular, it is consistent with naturalism to suppose that there are at least some necessary moral truths. Clarke-Doane has argued that moral realism is in better shape than mathematical realism, and yet few think that there is not a decent core of mathematics that is objectively true. For example, see Justin Clarke-Doane, "Morality and Mathematics: The Evolutionary Challenge," *Ethics* 122, no. 2 (2012): 313–340.

[411] Craig (RF), p. 180.

(1″) God exists.
(2″) God probably ensures that human moral experience is reliable to some extent.
(3″) Human moral experience indicates that God-given morality exists.
(4″) If God-given morality exists, then God exists.
(5″) Therefore, God exists.

Further relying on the work of Alvin Plantinga, particularly his evolutionary argument against naturalism, Craig declares that on naturalism, all beliefs are unwarranted, which is wholly irrelevant to the truth of (2).[412] Craig further states that on naturalism, all beliefs "have been selected for survival value, not truth, and are therefore unwarranted".[413] It is unclear how beliefs about the Big Bang theory, quantum mechanics, and theoretical elements directly aid human survival, in the same way that beliefs about empathy and social responsibility can. Especially since beliefs about God may be included, it would also seem that a 'scorched-earth' scenario of extreme scepticism – which can be prompted by such an approach – would aid the sceptical non-theist, rather than the theist, since the non-theists are presumably more comfortable with uncertainty.

Plantinga's/Craig's appeal to warrant or properly basic beliefs is futile, since anybody can claim that their beliefs are properly basic, including beliefs about naturalism. A situation presents itself not dissimilar from a well meaning but naive child technician declaring that, "every child is special". Also noting that Plantinga arguably needs natural theology here though the purpose of this approach is to avoid it, Plantinga is a believer in the presuppositionalist 'noetic effects of sin' concept, which privileges Christianity, is ad hoc, and is self-defeating, since he and Craig, like everybody else, would be unable to determine if sin had negatively impacted their own cognitive faculties. They cannot be sure that their arguments are good, or that they worship the correct god.

Perhaps the Hindu is correct, and the Christian's cognitive faculties are faulty due to sin or karma. Also a problem is that many believers consider the 'original sin' tale in Genesis as being mythical. Plantinga's evolutionary argument against naturalism, which entails that human evolution selected for survival rather than true beliefs, is counter-productive and otherwise multiply flawed.[414] In such scenarios, the critic can just accept a sort of Pyrrhonism or extreme scepticism, which ends the discussion, since nobody can argue for naturalism, supernaturalism, theism, Christianity, internal instigations of the Holy Spirit, and so forth, or the critic can acknowledge that human cognition is imperfect, which it actually is, and note that this is perfectly expected on naturalism, and probably less so on theism, making this further evidence

[412]Ibid., p. 180; Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 216–237; Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 227–240.

[413]To morality we can add mathematics and logic, as in other transcendental arguments for the existence of God.

[414]The possibility that the creator god wishes for us to be ignorant or misinformed must also be entertained. Cf. Genesis 3.

against theism.[415] There is certainly some truth to the idea, in that we have indeed evolved to believe in some things that are not true; this may explain why so many people believe in god/s. This is not mere levity, as such beliefs may have come about via pareidolia.[416] On the other hand, there is also an evolutionary advantage in forming true beliefs, at least about the immediate environment.

Some true beliefs can aid survival, and an evolved characteristic can later serve other functions; such as hands allowing for the use of simple tools but later allowing for typing. A creature that forms the belief that a dangerous predator is present just when a dangerous predator is present has an evolutionary advantage over creatures who sometimes form the false belief that no dangerous predator is present when a dangerous predator is indeed present, and perhaps also over creatures who sometimes form the false belief that a dangerous predator is present when no dangerous predator is present – though this cautious attitude also has its uses. So in the evolutionary arms race, it is to be expected that creatures will evolve to form true beliefs about the immediate environments in which they flourish, as well as useful beliefs, because true beliefs sometimes are useful.

With naturalistic hypotheses explaining variegated observations, the theist needs do much more to claim that God's involvement is probable. Craig then again appeals to emotion in stating that "rape, torture, child abuse, and brutality" are "moral abominations", while "love, generosity, equality, and self sacrifice are really good", unfairly declaring that those "who fail to see this are just morally handicapped".[417] Before departing from Plantingan notions, it may be helpful to briefly consider the *sensus divinitatus* that is seemingly alluded to by God's effects on human moral experience. It is relevant that the Judeo-Christian God's objective morality as (presumably) largely outlined in the Judeo-Christian Bible focuses much attention on issues that modern populations would consider trivial.[418]

A cursory reading of the 613 Old Testament *mitzvot* reveals the 'importance' of wearing *tzitzit* and *tefillin*, avoiding the donning of garments comprised of mixed materials, considering menstruating women to be unclean, and preparing sacrifices

[415]On the glory of agnosticism, cf. Bertrand Russell, *Mortals and Others, Volume II: American Essays 1931–1935* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 28: "The fundamental cause of the trouble is that in the modern world the stupid are cocksure while the intelligent are full of doubt."

[416]Elaborated on in §2.7.

[417]Craig (RF), p. 181. On p. 173, he also commented that an atheistic view of life seems "depressing", possibly revealing some of his motivation for desiring the existence of objective morality and God. It may be that Craig simply finds it too taxing a thought that the natural world is indifferent and that the universe cares not for him or his species, preferring that there are objective ideals of good, purpose, and meaning, and that human existence is of the utmost importance. This is actually reason to further doubt Craig. Note that Craig flippantly exaggerates atheistic would-be attitudes towards rape in his later work, claiming that (without God) "The rapist who goes against the herd mentality is doing nothing more serious than acting unfashionably, like the man who belches loudly at the dinner table". See Craig (OG), p. 133.

[418]This is no great presumption, as Craig indicates the primacy of the Bible, directly quoting the teaching (Romans 2:14–15) that "God's moral law is 'written on the hearts' of all men, so that even those who do not know God's law 'do naturally the things of the law'". See Craig (RF), p. 176.

correctly.[419] Conversely, there are many moral concerns shared by modern populaces that find no ('positive') mention in the Bible, such as racial equality, religious tolerance, homosexual rights, and numerous issues relating to people – including children – who have been raped, which recalls Craig's own attempts at playing the 'rape card'.[420] It would appear that the *sensus divinitatus* of moral experience – insofar as guiding persons towards the objective standard of morality – fails in the vast majority of people, which is evidence that does not cohere well with the theory that God intended to create objective morality for the benefit of humans. Also of relevance is the vast empirical evidence that many people's notions of morality differ greatly, which may disconfirm Craig's biblically-based belief that God's moral law is written on the hearts of all. In sum, Craig relies on circular reasoning and appeals to ignorance, ambiguity, emotion, authority, and the populace, whilst providing no evidence at all for the existence of objective morality, to say nothing of God-given morality, and fails to adequately explain evidence that disconfirms his hypothesis.[421]

2.5.3 The Euthyphro Dilemma

Confident that the two premises are true and that they prove God's existence, Craig addresses the Euthyphro Dilemma, which essentially states that if something is good merely because God wills it, then what is good becomes arbitrary, while if God wills

[419]Numbers 15:38, Deuteronomy 6:8, Deuteronomy 22:11, Leviticus 15:19–24. Laws concerning sacrifices are found throughout the Torah. Of course, not all believers live by such commands today.

[420]There was seemingly no room in the Ten Commandments or the 613 mitzvot, but there are 'negative' mentions of these issues in the Bible, in that God and/or God's people seem to condone such behaviour, including genocide and paedophilia. See Numbers 25:1–13, Exodus 22:20, Leviticus 20:13, and Numbers 31. Regarding rape, God's objective moral standard seems to indicate that in many cases, raped women are to be either killed or *purchased*, whereby the victim of rape is forced to marry their rapist, exposing a loophole for certain amoral opportunists, who would otherwise have had no chance in obtaining such a desirable wife. See Deuteronomy 22:23–29. It would seem that Craig's attempt to goad sceptics into accepting objective morality by claiming certain acts are 'really wrong' is fallacious for another reason, namely that his own god seems to approve of them. The Bible also has some choice things to say about slavery and torture, as in Ephesians 6:5–8 and Exodus 21:20–21. Many would see contemporary, secular, progressive, and yet subjective, morals as being superior to the objective morals of the sacred texts.

[421]Craig also attempts to persuade the sceptic by referring to scholarly moral relativists' "hardness of heart" when discussing the alleged objective wrongness of abusing children. Not only is this behaviour unprofessional, but the moral relativist certainly cannot be fairly described in this manner if they consider such actions to be subjectively wrong, would never commit such atrocities themselves, and would try to prevent such actions from happening, wherever possible. See Craig (OG), p. 142. Furthermore, Craig's phrase, "hardness of heart" is especially unfortunate, since the Bible makes it clear that God can be responsible for this. For example, see Exodus 9:12–16 and Romans 9:18. Also, in *On Guard* (p. 161), Craig presents an altered form of his moral argument, arguing that the existence of evil proves the existence of objective morality. Craig fails to present any evidence for the existence of 'objective evil'. Note that this is largely irrelevant to arguments from evil, which do not necessarily appeal to the existence of objective evils.

something because it is good, then "whether something is good or bad is independent of God".[422] Craig finds the first horn undesirable, as "at least some moral goods seem to be necessary", and, recognising that the Dilemma can be construed as an argument for "Atheistic Moral Platonism", which would undermine (1), Craig confidently asserts that the "major deficits" of Atheistic Moral Platonism suggest that the Dilemma is false, which somehow allows him to opt for a *tertium quid*.[423] But Craig's third horn is effectively the first, a sort of (restrictive) divine command theory coupled with the notion that "God's character is definitive of moral goodness" so that what God commands or wills is not arbitrarily good, but necessarily good.[424] It is unclear if Craig actually does avoid the arbitrariness of the first horn of the dilemma, particularly given his afore-mentioned views on God-sanctioned genocide and associated moral atrocities, especially when contrasted with his earlier examples of actions that are "really wrong":

> Therefore, God does these children no wrong in taking their lives. So whom does God wrong in commanding the destruction of the Canaanites? Not the Canaanite adults, for they were corrupt and deserving of judgement. Not the children, for they inherit eternal life. So who is wronged? Ironically, I think the most difficult part of this whole debate is the apparent wrong done to the Israeli soldiers themselves. Can you imagine what it would be like to have to break into some house and kill a terrified woman and her children? The brutalizing effect on these Israeli soldiers is disturbing.[425]

Relating to Craig's Judeo-Christian theism, this, and similar biblical passages make a mockery of Craig's claim that "God's commands are not arbitrary, and so we need not trouble ourselves about counterfactuals with impossible antecedents like 'If God were to command child abuse. . .'", such as the implied God-endorsed rape of Midianite virgin girls.[426] Craig counters the standard objection to his moral hypothesis, "Why pick God's nature as definitive of the Good?" with the

[422]Craig (RF), p. 181. For a useful discussion of the Euthyphro Dilemma and its religious consequences, see George W. Harris, "Religion, Morality, and the Euthyphro Dilemma," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 15, no. 1–2 (1984): 31–35.

[423]Craig (RF), p. 181.

[424]Ibid., pp. 181–182. This may be Anselm's 'third horn'. Cf. Katherin A. Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 8. This 'solution' may also place limitations on God's omnipotence and perfect freedom, namely, God's ability to be evil. This solution also would support my switching 'objective morality' for 'God-given morality'.

[425]William Lane Craig. "Slaughter of the Canaanites," accessed 06/11/2012, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/slaughter-of-the-canaanites. By pointing to Deuteronomy 7:3–4, Craig seems to endorse the Israelites' efforts to retain ethnic purity. Clearly, positing an unjustified objective standard of morality may have disastrous consequences in the real word. See Regina M. Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Hector Avalos, *Fighting Words: The Origins of Religious Violence* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2005).

[426]Craig (RF), p. 182. Cf. Numbers 31. If it were not yet obvious that Craig sees at least elements of his supposed objective morality in the Bible, he implies as much when reminiscing about his attendance at a meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature. See Craig (OG), pp. 141–142.

(as yet)[427] unjustified assertion that "God, by definition, is the greatest conceivable being, and a being which is the paradigm of goodness is greater than one which merely exemplifies goodness... is the locus and source of moral goodness".[428] For the Judeo-Christian tradition at least, this line of reasoning seems somewhat contradicted by God's claim that he is also the source of darkness and evil.[429] In any case, however Craig avoids the second horn of the Dilemma (including simply accepting the first horn, which should not obviously cause distress to the theist), he is no closer to demonstrating that objective morality exists, or that it could only – and would – exist if God exists.[430]

2.5.4 Bayesian Analysis

The prospects for a Bayesian analysis of this argument are even bleaker than for the previous arguments. Whilst previous arguments involved some evidence, this argument was found to be entirely question begging and circular, with no independent and convincing evidence for the existence of objective morality. The evidence that does exist, such as peoples' greatly differing views of morality, including the many differences with biblical notions, and gradual changes towards better functioning societies (such as the abolition of slavery, universal suffrage, and regulations on the financial elites), seems to disconfirm Craig's reasons for believing in a God-given standard of morality and his brand of theism, and supports a naturalistic view. From

[427] With arguments that rely on later arguments, that rely on earlier arguments, it becomes ever more obvious that Craig is fond of circular reasoning. Also, we really should not be discussing "God" at this stage. Craig should be content to prove some sort of supernaturalism true.

[428] Craig (RF), pp. 182–183. Note that the impartial critic who has not assumed the existence of the god of theism may entertain similar ideas, but involving 'evilness'. Another counter of Craig's is the rather unsophisticated claim that "God is by definition worthy of worship, so that He must be the embodiment of perfect moral goodness". See Craig (OG), p. 139.

[429] Isaiah 45:7, Amos 3:6. Note that one of Craig's responses to such challenging biblical passages is to admit that the Bible may not be inerrant, preferring to hold to the validity of his argument. See Craig (RF), p. 195. This is a reasonable course of action, though the price he pays is surprisingly great. Despite being a religious conservative who humbles himself before God, he would seemingly prefer that God's Word – on which his entire worldview is predicated – were errant, rather than his own. This approach is also counter-productive, given Craig's reliance on the 'truth of the Bible' as his main source of evidence for the climactic argument in his case for Christian theism, as we shall see in Part 4, and his views on time, which are crucial to his philosophical cumulative case. It would seem that Craig would rather cast doubt on his god's intentions and omnipotence (even if God was not responsible for the errors in the Bible, he is still accountable for the fact that people today do not have access to his 'true Word') than to simply admit that his argument is fallacious. This also staves off concerns that I unfairly appeal to the Bible when these arguments have not yet argued for the 'Christian God'. Craig's reliance on the Bible is evident throughout his case.

[430] It is still important that the theist avoids the second horn of the Dilemma, and the implied independent standard of morality, if they wish to argue from morality to God, and perhaps to further argue that God is perfectly free and omnipotent.

Craig's theistic/Christian perspective, theistic/Christian disagreements over ethics would be particularly problematic; while expected on naturalism or non-theism, it is at least somewhat surprising on theism.

Furthermore, direct (for example, the biblical genocides) and indirect (for example, the numerous cases of child molestation perpetrated by Catholic clergy) consequences of Yahweh's revelation/s, which many believers and non-believers would consider to be evil or wrong, seem to compromise the identification of the Judeo-Christian god as the God of theism, and again raises questions as to what actually is objectively good or right. It seems counter-intuitive that the omnibenevolent God would not only allow evil, but would allow or even order his believers and representatives to commit evil acts, often in his name. It would be more reasonable for such a god to intervene when his followers enslave others, for example, so that they may serve as role models and further glorify God; many mortals have opposed such things at great risk and cost, yet God, who could safely and immediately end such moral travesties chooses not to. This again counts probabilistically against theism, and towards naturalism and other alternatives.

Previous Bayesian deliberations on the probability of theism relative to its rivals still hold. One consideration that would seem highly relevant to the moral argument is the possibility of gods that are uninterested in morality. It is not obvious that an existing god would necessarily be good or supply its subjects with clear standards for good, evil, right, and wrong. If there were no objective morality, then Craig's theism would seem to be immediately disproved, while alternatives such as certain polytheisms, pantheisms, deisms, and other alternative monotheisms, such as those involving a morally-indifferent god, would be plausible.[431] Furthermore, without adequate background knowledge, it could be stated – very generously – that the probability that God and objective morality co-exist is no greater than 25%, as objective morality may or may not exist, with or without God (four possibilities); and this co-existence scenario is descriptive only, as it does not imply a causal relation or imply which is the cause. There is nothing here that can aid the case for theism. If anything, considerations about morality may result in a Bayesian argument from evil, against God's existence.[432]

[431]The possibility of an 'evil god', along with the associated problem of good, parodied on the problem of evil, has also been raised. For example, see Stephen Law, "The Evil-God Challenge," *Religious Studies* 46, no. 3 (2010): 353–373.

[432]As explained in §3.2.

2.5.5 *Conclusion*

As with all the arguments analysed thus far, the evidence appealed to – the existence of the universe (as apart from God), the apparent beginning of the universe, the fine-tuning of the universe for human or intelligent life, and the supposed presence of objective morality in the universe – could hold if God does not exist, and would not necessarily obtain if there did indeed exist some god or gods. Therefore, it cannot be expected that the existence of objective morality, if it exists, could – via non-mathematical reasoning – demonstrate the existence of God. Furthermore, probabilistic reasoning, as has been the case with all previously examined arguments, treats theism unfavourably. Both Craig's premises merely beg the question, with no evidence supplied that objective morality exists or that its existence somehow requires that God co-exist. The biggest flaw in Craig's axiological argument may be its circular nature, as Craig assumes God's existence in his attempt to prove the existence of the objective morality that supposedly demonstrates God's existence.

The most I could grant Craig concerning his moral argument is that there may or may not be an objective standard of morality, which we may or may not have access to, and if there is, it may or may not come from a god or gods, that may or may not exist.

2.6 The Ontological Argument

The next argument to be analysed is the last of the 'real arguments' for bare theism, and the most important, though it is the one most easily dismissed by critics. None of Craig's other arguments, even if generally considered to be sound or good, made it obvious that the hypothesised god is a – or rather, the – maximally great being that he believes exists. The purely conceptual (*a priori*) ontological argument (and its many variants) attempts just that. Craig notes that it was Anselm of Canterbury who first proposed the argument around one thousand years ago, supposing that "if we could conceive of something greater than God, then *that* would be God",[433] which almost sounds like a challenge for non-theists.[434] While on the understanding that Anselm's argument "is still hotly

[433]Craig (RF), p. 95.

[434]Challenge accepted.

debated today", Craig settles on Plantinga's modal formulation, which he thinks is "the most sophisticated" and "has the best chance of being cogent", summarised in this manner:[435]

(1) It is possible that a maximally great being exists.
(2) If it is possible that a maximally great being exists, then a maximally great being exists in some possible world.
(3) If a maximally great being exists in some possible world, then it exists in every possible world.
(4) If a maximally great being exists in every possible world, then it exists in the actual world.
(5) If a maximally great being exists in the actual world, then a maximally great being exists.
(6) Therefore, a maximally great being exists.[436]

Craig explains that "Plantinga conceives of God as a being which is 'maximally excellent' in every possible world", which entails "such excellent-making properties as omniscience, omnipotence, and moral perfection".[437] These great-making properties were not necessary for the other arguments, but now they are finally attributed to this being known as God. However, there are many problems and oddities that arise with the notion of a perfect god, and also with associating this imagined entity with the god of Christian theists like Craig. For example, it can be questioned why such a great being has not made its existence more obvious. Without intending to be overly humorous, it is possible that in some of these possible worlds, God has freely made her existence much more obvious to people, so that unconvincing *a priori* arguments such as this one would not be necessary. Consider also that in the previous argument, 'good' supposedly flowed from God so that now describing

[435]Craig (RF), pp. 96, 183. For typical objections to ontological arguments, such as the assumption that existence is a predicate and those concerning the definition and description of God and God's properties, see T. J. Mawson, "The Ontological Argument," in *Belief in God: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005), pp. 125–132; Graham Robert Oppy, *Ontological Arguments and Belief in God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Sobel (LT), pp. 29–167. Note that if it is accepted that existence is characteristic of greatness, so that an existing entity is greater than one that is merely conceived or imagined, then it seems to become impossible to imagine a maximally great being; that thing that is imagined is not great at all, and probably finite on account of human mental limitations, as well as differing from person to person, and is – as an idea – not equivalent to any real-world counterpart. It would also become obvious that positing an actual maximally great being would be unnecessary in discovering a greater being than the imaginary 'maximally great being'; even the humble tufted titmouse would be greater than an infinite, though imaginary (and thus causally effete and impotent), god. The correct approach would then be to empirically verify which is the greatest actually existing being, and to contrast it with that 'not really great' imagined entity. Note also that, in a sense, imagined entities do actually exist, as collections of particles or electrical impulses in the brain, and are less great than the brain itself. Consider also that such theorising would very probably lead to an inadequate and incorrect conception of God, and thus, depending on the religious tradition, to idolatry and blasphemy.

[436]Craig (RF), pp. 184–185.

[437]Ibid., p. 184.

God as 'all good' would be akin to claiming that God is like God. But the many problems concerning God and theism will be properly considered in Part 3.

After claiming that "premises (2)-(5) of this ontological argument are relatively uncontroversial", Craig recognises that "the principal issue to be settled" is whether God is merely epistemically possible ("consistent with what we know"), or whether God is also metaphysically possible ("really possible").[438] Without yet raising important issues to do with the description of this maximally great being and why it must be God, the god of theism, a cursory glance at the argument and its use of possible worlds semantics (and S5 modal logic) reveals that only (1) ought cause significant controversy, as any reasonable objections to premises that proceed it would tend to allude to the same issues that (1) faces.[439]

2.6.1 Premise 1 – The Possibility of God's Possible Existence

Craig first seeks intuitive, *a priori* warrant for the first premise, labelling it a coherent notion, then surprisingly asserts that in order for the argument to fail, (1) must be incoherent, "like the concept of a married bachelor".[440] If by 'fail', Craig means, "be rejected as a good argument", he is sorely mistaken, and is merely attempting to shift

[438]Ibid., p. 185. Cf. p. 196, "We could grant, if we wish, that we can't prove in a non-question-begging way that God's existence is possible". Saul A. Kripke recognised that the philosopher need not be committed to the existence of a possible world merely because it can be visualised. See Saul A. Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 15–16, 43–45. Recall also David Chalmers' essay, concluding that conceivability does not entail metaphysical possibility. See David Chalmers, "Does Conceivability Entail Metaphysical Possibility?," in *Conceivability and Possibility*, ed. Gendler and O'Leary-Hawthorne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002). Cf. Swinburne's opinion: "All ontological arguments known to me that purport to show the logical necessity of God's existence seem to me unsound". See Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 145.

[439]Within the framework of possible worlds, Craig says that all the possible worlds, including the actual world, form a "maximal description of reality". See Craig (RF), p. 184. This is a strange notion as it is essentially 'reality' coupled with 'non-realities'. In other words, this maximal description of reality is reality only. This should be made clearer upon realising that non-realities do actually exist, in reality, as mere ideas in the real brains of real philosophers such as Craig. This is somewhat similar to how apologists refer to 'contemporary and near-contemporary sources' for Jesus, which reduces to 'near-contemporary sources', which reduces further to 'not-contemporary sources'.

[440]Ibid., p. 185. Craig finds explicit disagreement with his colleague, Richard Swinburne: "the existence of God is a tremendous thing, the most fundamental truth about the universe. It seems to trivialize it to say that it holds for the same reason as does the truth that all bachelors are unmarried". See Swinburne (CT), p. 275.

the burden of proof.[441] He has already conceded that epistemic entertainability does not entail metaphysical possibility. Craig then devotes his efforts to possible objections that are more relevant to alternative formulations of the ontological argument, dealing with issues such as "metaphysical excess" and the coherence of a "quasi-maximally great being", without addressing the crucial problem he highlighted earlier.[442] Craig then deceptively conflates the crucial issue of (1) with a similar issue for the quasi-maximally great being, again admitting that there is currently no way of knowing if either is exemplified. He unconvincingly and irrelevantly claims that the notion of a maximally great being "has priority" over a quasi-maximally great being, bizarrely concluding that "our prima facie warrant for premise (1) remains".[443]

Craig then seeks *a posteriori* warrant for (1), which is somewhat concessionary and compensatory, given that this is an *a priori* argument. Craig harks back to the previous arguments as support, though they were found to be unconvincing, only allow for the (improbable) epistemic possibility, and further do not at all argue for the existence of a being that is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-good (as well as residing in every possible world). He also mentions a conceptualist argument, but acknowledges that many nominalistic alternatives to conceptualism would need to be rejected, such as fictionalism, constructibilism, and figuralism.[444] Craig again attempts to argue that considerations of simplicity justify viewing all the arguments

[441]This is even more overt in a recent article written for general audiences, where Craig declares that "The atheist has to maintain that it's impossible that God exists. He has to say that the concept of God is incoherent, like the concept of a married bachelor or a round square". See William Lane Craig. "Is the Material World all there is? Arguments for the Existence of God," accessed 06/12/2013, http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2013/08/06/3819108.htm. McCormick explains that theistic appeals to possibility are not sufficient, and that it is unjust when theists deny atheists this luxury, and further expect that atheists provide absolute proof to support their non-belief. See Matthew McCormick. "Reasonable Belief, Proof, and Uncertainty," accessed 31/05/2016, http://www.provingthenegative.com/2008/03/reasonable-belief-proof-and-uncertainty.html. Note that God's existence may indeed be impossible, on account of conflicting properties, or due to the problem of evil, which shall be discussed later. For an example of the former, see Kenneth Einar Himma. "Anselm: Ontological Argument for God's Existence," accessed 14/01/2014, http://www.iep.utm.edu/ont-arg. Himma explains that God's ability to create a being with free will (omnipotence) might conflict with his knowing what such a being will do (divine foreknowledge and omniscience), which eliminates the free will; hence such a God cannot exist.

[442]Craig (RF), pp. 185–187. A popular example of this metaphysical excess is that of a maximally great god-destroying weapon that necessarily exists in all possible worlds.

[443]Ibid., p. 187. Note that his possibly overcoming and defeating such objections and alternatives does nothing to solve the problem he had himself highlighted: the assumption of metaphysical possibility.

[444]This argument primarily concerned omniscience, saying nothing of omnipotence and omnibenevolence, so that it may only refer to Craig's undesired quasi maximally great being. See ibid., pp. 187–188. Note also that Craig is no Platonist. For example, see his many contributions in Paul M. Gould, ed. *Beyond the Control of God?: Six Views on the Problem of God and Abstract Objects* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014).

as indicating the existence of the one, and maximal, being.[445] This is no more true than the claim that one single human being designed and created the Empire State Building, The University of Sydney, Hilbert's Hotel, Paley's Watch, and Russell's Teapot, simply because 'it is simpler'. Claiming that the various other arguments argued for a maximally great being is to posit far more than is necessary, though the failure of those arguments renders this point moot.

Craig finally admits that this argument may indeed be circular, in the sense that "one's only reason for accepting a premise in the argument is that one already accepts the conclusion".[446] He defends this approach, however, claiming that the theistic arguments "are like links in a coat of chain mail", rather than "links in a chain", which implies that perhaps Craig realises that none of the arguments are strong enough to stand on their own, and may indicate that his entire cumulative case is circular.[447] Nevertheless, Craig concludes:

> In that sense Anselm was wrong in thinking that he had discovered a single argument which, standing independently of all the rest, served to demonstrate God's existence in all his greatness.[448]

This may be why the ontological argument, important as it is in establishing the maximal properties of God, fails to make an appearance in his subsequent *On Guard*, and is usually not invoked in Craig' debates.[449] The originator of this renowned and refreshed version of Anselm's argument also admits that it relies on an unjustified equivocation between epistemic possibility and metaphysical possibility, further conceding that his argument is not a "proof" of God.[450] Also of great importance is the issue alluded to immediately before the start of this subsection, that of the definition of God as the maximally great being. There are many points of contention, with the most significant being that God is claimed to be necessary, that is, she exists in every possible world. This seems no different than the efforts of previous thinkers (such as Anselm) who merely thought or defined God into existence (such as by incorporating 'existence' into the definition). But God can also be thought into non-existence. Consider how simply altering the first premise of the Plantingan argument allows for an ontological argument *against* God's existence:

(1′) It is possible that a maximally great being does not exist.
(2′) If it is possible that a maximally great being does not exist, then a maximally great being does not exist in some possible world.

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[445] Craig (RF), p. 188.

[446] Ibid., p. 188. Note that a circular argument may still be logically valid, and even sound. It just would not offer anything original and convincing to the critic.

[447] Ibid., p. 188. This hints at the circularity of his approach, particularly when the previous arguments were found to be unconvincing, so that Craig is rather in possession of a collection of broken links.

[448] Ibid., p. 188–189.

[449] Cf. "I've not used it in evangelism simply because it's so difficult for people to understand and because there are other, more compelling arguments". Ibid., p. 196.

[450] Alvin Plantinga and James F. Sennett, *The Analytic Theist: An Alvin Plantinga Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), pp. 65–71.

(3′) If a maximally great being does not exist in some possible world, then it does not exist in every possible world.
(4′) If a maximally great being does not exist in every possible world, then it does not exist in the actual world.
(5′) If a maximally great being does not exist in the actual world, then a maximally great being does not exist.
(6′) Therefore, a maximally great being does not exist.

However, in the parlance of classical logic, (1) and (1') effectively entail each other; that they lead to differing conclusions here suggests some error. In fact, as Craig also recognises, there is no logical error in either argument, apart from the aforementioned epistemic-metaphysical equivocation.[451] And yet, Craig does not seem to assert that (1') needs to be demonstrated to be incoherent. The 'error' seems to be the commingling of classical and S5 modal logic, which is essentially introduced in the very definition of God as existing in every possible world. This definition entails that, within the S5 framework, (1) does not merely claim that God's existence is possible; (1) claims that God exists, revealing the circulatory nature of even this sophisticated formulation of the ontological argument. Similarly, within the S5 framework, (1') actually claims that God does not exist. This is why both arguments are logically valid, though their conclusions differ so.

But only one of these arguments is sound, the one with the true first premise. From the definition of God, he either exists or does not exist in every possible world so that this talk of 'possibly existing' is deceptive. Craig may not fully grasp this,[452] asking "which do you think is more plausibly true: (1) or (1')"?[453] On classical logic, they should simultaneously be true, as 'only' declaring the possibility of one is to implicitly accept the possibility of the other. Craig believes that this oddity is caused by the

[451]William Lane Craig. "Necessary Existence and the Ontological Argument," accessed 13/01/2014, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/necessary-existence-and-the-ontological-argument.

[452]He does seem to recognise more limitations of such arguments than he indicates here, as revealed by earlier writings: "But if we are talking about logical possibility, then to say that the proposition 'A maximally great being exists' is possible is to say that He does exist. For if He exists in any possible world, then by definition He exists in all. Thus, if this proposition is possibly true in the logical sense, it is necessarily true. Now I agree with Leslie that the ontological argument seems to fail because all we intuit is that a maximally great being is epistemically possible, but we cannot say if His existence is logically possible. But how is this even relevant to the issue at hand? The coherence of the logical necessity of God's existence does not depend on the success of the ontological argument or our intuitions. It is possible that the ontological argument fails to prove God's existence, and yet for all we know God's existence is logically necessary." See William Lane Craig, "The Teleological Argument and the Anthropic Principle," in *The Logic of Rational Theism: Exploratory Essays*, ed. Craig and McLeod, *Problems in Contemporary Philosophy* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), pp. 150–151.

[453]William Lane Craig. "Necessary Existence and the Ontological Argument," accessed 13/01/2014, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/necessary-existence-and-the-ontological-argument. Note that by Craig's own reasoning and earlier burden-shifting, Craig should accept the challenge to show that God's non-existence is an incoherent notion. If he cannot, he ought to accept that God does not exist. . .

confusion over epistemic and metaphysical possibilities, but it is also caused by the contentious and unjustified definition of God, which, as Craig recognises, renders the existence of God "necessary or impossible", and which leads to an alternative account of modality (S5 modal logic).[454] A much more transparent and simple reformulated version:

(1″) A maximally great being that necessarily exists in all possible worlds exists.
(2″) Therefore, a maximally great being exists.

Craig might as well say, "God exists. Therefore, God exists." In fact, only the first premise is necessary; truly the mark of a good circular argument.

2.6.2 Bayesian Analysis

Given that this is a conceptual argument with no evidence presented, there is seemingly little hope for a Bayesian or even quasi-Bayesian analysis. Alternatives to theism can be considered however, as with the previous arguments. It may be that the greatest being imaginable or possible is not the seemingly limited and embounded god of theism, but an all-inclusive god, as expressed by pantheistic, panentheistic and pandeistic proponents.[455] Such a mereological ontological argument will be explored in §3.5.[456] Reflecting on the intentions of the maximally-great entity may also yield notions quite different to theism, such as considerations of god's intention to create,[457] to remain coy about his existence, to allow a certain amount of evil to exist, and so forth. Various unpersuasive arguments can doubtless be waged for all such considerations, perhaps revealing the arbitrariness of declaring that the maximally great entity is any particular god and must possess certain attributes.[458] Moreover, the proposed argument against God's existence seems better supported by evidence (or rather, the lack thereof) as discussed in the critiques of the previously presented arguments. Craig himself indicated that the ontological argument might need supporting by other arguments/evidences. If the latter is insufficient, and so far it seems that it is, it bodes ill for the maximally important ontological argument.

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[454] Ibid.

[455] Pantheism would also be supposed if omniessence were arbitrarily assigned as one of the maximal being's definitive properties, alongside omnipotence, omniscience, omnibenevolence, and necessity.

[456] This entity might also be merely the sum of all possible worlds, such as in the scenario of modal realism, and is only superficially called a 'god', as in a naturalistic pantheism.

[457] Recall that it seems particularly unthinkable that a perfect being would desire an imperfect world, i.e., one in which anything other than the perfect being exists.

[458] Some would even consider that the argument leads to polytheism. For example, see Brian Leftow, "Anselmian polytheism," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 23, no. 2 (1988): 77–104. Also see R. Harwood, "Polytheism, pantheism, and the ontological argument," *Religious Studies* 35, no. 4 (1999): 477–491.

2.6.3 Conclusion

The most important of Craig's arguments for bare theism, the ontological argument, is also the easiest to reject. The crucial error of the first premise is the equivocation – at least in the interpreter's mind – between the epistemic possibility and metaphysical possibility of God's existence. This argument proceeds from the latter, though it is unknown if God or the maximally great entity is metaphysically possible; under the S5 modal reasoning employed, in order to know if God is possible, it would have to be known that God exists. Such a circular argument is unconvincing to non-believers, though its failure to describe anything new about God should leave believers unimpressed also. Furthermore, the definition of God provided is arbitrary – as is the delineation between essential and accidental properties – and is an attempt to define God into existence, just as previous formulations of the futile argument had done; Anselm essentially defined God as existing, while Craig defines God as necessary, which entails that God exists. Given the existence of the maximally great being, Craig tries to argue for his preferred god on the basis of simplicity, though he was unsuccessful, and such concerns could point to monistic hypotheses, so that – if simplicity is indeed conducive to truth – some pantheistic alternative is more plausible.[459]

Finally, there is no obvious link between the hypothesised god/s of the other arguments and this maximally great being, so that this argument, crucial as it *ought* be, seems out of place in the cumulative case. In fact, if this (*a priori*) argument were successful, it would actually be the other (typically *a posteriori*) arguments that are out of place in the case for theism; they would be redundant.

2.7 The Experiential Argument

Craig's argument from personal experience, which he admits "isn't really an argument for God's existence", is nevertheless important enough for him to include it in many of the public presentations of his cumulative case, in place of the crucial ontological argument.[460] While the argument is usually not properly formulated in

[459]For example, there is no unnecessary multiplying of entities in pantheistic views that equate God and the universe. For some discussion on pantheism, see Levine (Pantheism). Remember also that Craig believes God is Yahweh, yet there seems to be numerous ways in which a maximally great entity could be greater than Yahweh. For example, a being that does not need to create at all, and a god that does not need to constantly address his mistakes.

[460]For his opinion on this not being an argument, see William Lane Craig. "Is the Material World all there is? Arguments for the Existence of God," accessed 06/12/2013, http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2013/08/06/3819108.htm. Note that Craig does view this 'argument' as a reason to think that God exists. For example, see Arif Ahmed and William Lane Craig, *Is Belief in God More Reasonable than Disbelief?* (La Mirada, CA: Biola University, 2005), Audio CD.

any of his scholarly or popular books, it does take various forms among his many media outlets, several of which shall be critiqued below.

2.7.1 *Properly Basic Belief*

In an article written for the benefit of his Australian audience, Craig declares that "you can know God exists wholly apart from arguments simply by immediately experiencing him", hinting at some mystical phenomenon.[461] He then claims that "This was the way people in the Bible knew God", which appears to be at odds with the supposed abundance of objective, empirical proofs that God graced on his believers, in the biblical times; unfortunately long before the advent of the camera.[462] Seemingly setting aside his evidentialism and adopting a reformed epistemological attitude, Craig presents a summarised argument:

(1) Beliefs which are appropriately grounded may be rationally accepted as basic beliefs not grounded on argument.
(2) Belief that the biblical God exists is appropriately grounded.
(3) Therefore, belief that the biblical God exists may be rationally accepted as a basic belief not grounded on argument.[463]

Despite the claims of "immediately experiencing him", there is no further discussion on what such an experience is or appears to be, or how it can be considered authentic; the argument has further shifted the focus to belief. It seems that this formulation is not truly an experiential argument, but a modified version of Plantinga's notion of 'warranted Christian belief'. Both suffer from the counterarguments presented by alternative religions, and from the many problems around presuppositionalism. Referring to issues such as "the problem of other minds", Craig argues for (1), that there are basic beliefs that can be rationally held without deferring to evidence.[464] This tactic could backfire, however, as the critic may simply accept that nothing can be known with certainty, so that an argument for the certainty of God is impossible. Just as with his moral argument, Craig asserts that his "seeing and feeling and hearing things" allows him to declare: "there are certain physical objects

[461] William Lane Craig. "Is the Material World all there is? Arguments for the Existence of God," accessed 06/12/2013, http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2013/08/06/3819108.htm. Note that the focus is on the 'biblical God', but the argument could just as easily apply to the god of 'bare theism'.

[462] For various divine appearances, manifestations and miracles, see Genesis 2–3, 1 Kings 18:21–39, Mark 1, and Acts 9:3–9.

[463] William Lane Craig. "Is the Material World all there is? Arguments for the Existence of God," accessed 06/12/2013, http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2013/08/06/3819108.htm.

[464] See ibid. Perhaps only the subject's mind exists, and perhaps all things the subject recalls are false memories, implanted just a few seconds ago. Metaphysical solipsism, both indefensible and irrefutable, appears to be more of a problem for the theist than for the sceptic.

which I am sensing". With no convincing argument whatsoever, Craig merely assumes epistemic parity between religious experiences, and sensory experiences, the latter of which can be confirmed by others, examined via other modalities, manipulated, predicted, et cetera. Nevertheless, Craig concludes that there are *properly* basic beliefs, grounded not in argument or evidence, but in experience.

Pending clarification about what makes a belief 'appropriately grounded' and 'rational', the first premise seems reasonable. If there is a fault with the argument, then, it must lie with (2), that belief in (the biblical) God is appropriately grounded. Craig's entire reasoning for this crucial claim:

> In the same way, belief in God is for those who seek Him a properly basic belief grounded in our experience of God.[465]

He did warn that this was not an argument for God's existence. Whatever it is, it certainly would not be convincing to the non-believer. The critic could merely object that belief in God has not been established as properly basic or that the experiences of God cannot be judged as being veridical. Alternatively, the entire argument can be accepted on the proviso that the possibility and consequences of metaphysical excess also be accepted, just as with certain forms of the ontological argument. In other words, while exclusivist belief in the 'biblical God' and the entire panoply of Christian beliefs can be considered to be properly basic, so too can beliefs in a pantheistic god, an evil god (perhaps Descartes' evil genius), or a divine hierarchy or committee of squabbling Aztec gods.[466] So long as the claimed experience is believed genuine, on this argument, no matter how self-serving or delusional, any belief can be considered properly basic and need not be subject to argument or evidence. And that would be as helpful as declaring that every child is special.

Along with the very loose interpretations of 'rational' and 'appropriately grounded', it seems that this undercutting defeater of metaphysical excess is too high a price to pay for the logical Judeo-Christian, and also Islamic, theist. Not only can any belief be considered rational, but the truths of the various Abrahamic religions cannot be said to be exclusively true. In other words, it is rational to believe that all gods exist, and that all religions are 'true', bar their claims to exclusivism; we

[465] Ibid.

[466] The theist could object that all such experiences derive from God, and are misinterpreted by all but the devout theists, which merely begs the question. This would also be counter-intuitive for the exclusivist theist as this would mean that God is deceptive and/or apathetic to the religious beliefs of her people. Furthermore, it could then be that Christian theists are in actuality experiencing Gaia or one of the Hindu gods. It would seem that in arguing from personal religious experiences to God, the exclusivist theist (or Christian) needs to demonstrate the veridicality of their experiences, and prove that the experiences of non-theists (or non-Christians) are non-veridical. For a balanced discussion of various issues relating to the 'problem' of religious diversity, including forms of religious pluralism, see Philip L. Quinn and Kevin Meeker, eds., *The Philosophical Challenge of Religious Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

all see a different part of the same elephant. Note that in this way, strong atheists might also be able to justify their belief that there is no god.[467] Additionally, the presence of these many non-theistic or non-Christian experiences also indicates – since no one exclusivist religion can claim 50% of the world's religious adherents – that most such experiences are not veracious (the same could be said for experiences more generally). So we do not have adequate grounds for thinking our personal religious experiences veridical; we in fact have grounds for thinking that they are not, which means that we here have the beginnings of an argument against God's existence. Finally, Craig elsewhere stresses the importance of the *truth* of the various worldviews, rather than the *rationality* of them, so that he inadvertently diminishes the importance of his own arguments.[468]

2.7.2 Experience

This second formulation of Craig's experiential argument, sourced from one of his public debates, is very similar to the first, though there is no great emphasis on belief:[469]

> You can experience God personally. This isn't really an argument for God's existence, rather it's the claim that you can know that God exists wholly apart from arguments, simply by immediately experiencing him. This was the way people in the Bible knew God. . . Now if this is the case then there's a real danger that arguments for god's existence could actually distract you from God himself. If you're sincerely seeking God, then God will make his existence evident to you. The Bible promises: "draw near to God and he will draw near to you." We mustn't so concentrate on the external proofs that we fail to hear the inner voice of God speaking to our own hearts. For those who listen, God becomes an immediate reality in their lives.[470]

While the focus here is indeed on experiences of God, no examples of such qualia are provided, again, and nary a mention is made of judging the veridicality of such experiences. There are numerous naturalistic[471] explanations of such experiences or

[467]For an intriguing discussion about intense feelings of God's non-existence, see Stephen Bullivant, "Introducing Irreligious Experiences," *Implicit Religion* 11, no. 1 (2008): 7–24.

[468]Craig (RF), p. 189.

[469]This allows differentiation, and the focus to be moved from the notion of properly basic beliefs, to the veridicality of experiential claims.

[470]Arif Ahmed and William Lane Craig, *Is Belief in God More Reasonable than Disbelief?* (La Mirada, CA: Biola University, 2005), Audio CD.

[471]There are also numerous possible supernatural explanations that do not imply the involvement of God.

claims of experiences, including misinterpretations of the subconscious/dreams, false memories,[472] hypnosis, substance abuse, fasting/starvation,[473] legitimately-used medication, deceit (both intentional and unintentional), sleep deprivation, being near death, hypoxia,[474] brain damage, some unexplained temporary delusion,[475] or even contact from an advanced alien species or sufficiently powerful human from 'another dimension'.[476] Explanations involving epilepsy and mental illness are also possible and, while perhaps politically incorrect, are empirically supported.[477] Also, some claimants may have been confused by distorted images in their peripheral vision.[478]

[472]Some interesting discussion on false memories, particularly pertaining to Christian fictions, can be found in Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus Before the Gospels: How the Earliest Christians Remembered, Changed, and Invented Their Stories of the Savior* (New York: HarperOne, 2016). Therein Ehrman also explains how eyewitnesses misremember, that we do not have access to eyewitness accounts about Jesus, that tradents chop and change the stories to suit themselves and their communities, and that not everything in the holy texts is intended to be taken literally. A recent 'mega-analysis' seemingly indicates that around 50% of people are amenable to suggestion, and form false memories/beliefs, which are often indistinguishable from true memories. See Alan Scoboria et al., "A mega-analysis of memory reports from eight peer-reviewed false memory implantation studies," *Memory* 25, no. 2 (2017): 146–163.

[473]Note that substance abuse and fasting are routine in several religious traditions. Interestingly, Jesus was said to have been fasting in the wilderness, alone, for an unlikely forty days and nights. The hungry Jesus hallucinated an interaction with a non-existing being (Satan), and suffered from delusions of non-grandeur. See Matthew 4:1–11. It may seem strange today, but behaviours and actions leading to delusions/hallucinations were normal and even praiseworthy in ancient religious communities.

[474]Oxygen deprivation and the levels of other chemicals in the body are often considered to contribute to near-death experiences. See Zalika Klemenc-Ketis, Janko Kersnik, and Stefek Grmec, "The effect of carbon dioxide on near-death experiences in out-of-hospital cardiac arrest survivors: A prospective observational study," *Critical Care* 14, no. 2 (2010): R56. doi: 10.1186/cc8952. This suggests that artificial religious experiences are possible.

[475]It is worth noting that artificial religious experiences can arise from certain cerebral stimulations. See Michael A. Persinger et al., "The Electromagnetic Induction of Mystical and Altered States within the Laboratory," *Journal of Consciousness Exploration & Research* 1, no. 7 (2010): 808–830.

[476]Some form of telepathy may be naturally possible, via a similar phenomenon to quantum entanglement, as speculated by some unconventional scientists. See Dean Radin, *Entangled Minds: Extrasensory Experiences in a Quantum Reality* (New York: Pocket Books, 2006). This seems even more plausible if the hypothesized human hails from the far more technologically advanced future. If theorising about time travel and psychic abilities seems counter-productive, recall that this is all still naturalistic theorising, unlike Craig's appeals to the supernatural.

[477]E. Carrazana et al., "Epilepsy and Religious Experiences: Voodoo Possession," *Epilepsia* 40, no. 2 (1999): 239–241; Shahar Arzy and Roey Schurr, "'God has sent me to you': Right temporal epilepsy, left prefrontal psychosis," *Epilepsy & Behavior* 60, no. 1 (2016): 7–10; Paul Chadwick and Max Birchwood, "The Omnipotence of Voices. A Cognitive Approach to Auditory Hallucinations.," *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 164, no. 2 (1994): 190–201. We could also consider the roles that schizophrenia and dissociative identity ('split personality') disorder may have played in some alleged revelations.

[478]Jason M. Tangen, Sean C. Murphy, and Matthew B. Thompson, "Flashed face distortion effect: Grotesque faces from relative spaces," *Perception* 40, no. 5 (2011): 628–630.

There are also numerous naturalistic – often evolutionary – explanations provided by the academic fields of Cognitive Science of Religion and what is termed 'neurotheology',[479] such as the tendency for people to seek personal agency and interpret natural phenomena anthropomorphically, often via apophenia and pareidolia (pattern recognition).[480] Note that such a tendency towards unsophisticated heuristics or pattern recognition, including the tendency to fuse this with agency and intention, is easily explained by evolutionary processes: those that consistently interpreted benign noises as originating from a predator would certainly be more likely to survive when these occurrences turned out to be genuine, compared with those that failed to make the (mostly erroneous) association. Over-generating can be expected to be advantageous compared with under-generating.[481] Psychologists Kurt Gray and Daniel Wegner explain:

> The high cost of failing to detect agents and the low cost of wrongly detecting them has led researchers to suggest that people possess a Hyperactive Agent Detection Device, a cognitive module that readily ascribes events in the environment to the behavior of agents (Atran, 2002; Barrett, 2000). This inclination toward agent detection is likely one foundation for human belief in God (Barrett, 2004). If people hold agents responsible for anomalous events, then events for which an earthly agent cannot be found may be attributed instead to supernatural one.[482]

[479]Scott Atran and Joseph Henrich, "The Evolution of Religion: How Cognitive By-Products, Adaptive Learning Heuristics, Ritual Displays, and Group Competition Generate Deep Commitments to Prosocial Religions," *Biological Theory* 5, no. 1 (2010): 18–30; Dean H. Hamer, *The God Gene: How Faith is Hardwired into Our Genes* (New York: Doubleday, 2004); Evan Fales, *Divine Intervention: Metaphysical and Epistemological Puzzles* (London: Routledge, 2010). One noteworthy pattern occurs when measuring religiosity against existential security, which is "the degree to which individuals feel that their survival and well-being can be taken for granted". See Jonathan A. Lanman, "The Importance of Religious Displays for Belief Acquisition and Secularization," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 27, no. 1 (2012): 51. People may feel more of a need to commit to religious ideologies, increasing the chance of 'divine experiences', when living uncomfortable lives filled with multiple threats.

[480]Deborah Kelemen and Cara DiYanni, "Intuitions About Origins: Purpose and Intelligent Design in Children's Reasoning About Nature," *Journal of Cognition and Development* 6, no. 1 (2005): 3–31; Tapani Riekki et al., "Paranormal and Religious Believers Are More Prone to Illusory Face Perception than Skeptics and Non-believers," *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 27, no. 2 (2013): 150–155. Several psychologists note "the readiness with which we attribute intentionality to objects on the basis of minimal cues." See Christopher C. French and Anna Stone, *Anomalistic Psychology: Exploring Paranormal Belief and Experience* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 197.

[481]Those who get things exactly right will do better still. Perhaps we can expect that greater precision will eventually emerge. It is up for debate whether humans are currently at that level of accurate – if expensive – general processing. Contrast this with Plantinga's evolutionary argument against naturalism.

[482]Kurt Gray and Daniel M. Wegner, "Blaming God for Our Pain: Human Suffering and the Divine Mind," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 14, no. 1 (2010): 9.

In other words, humans are inclined towards patternicity and agenticity; they are hard-wired to 'believe' in patterns and agents, whether or not what they believe in is veridical; they are prone to false positive beliefs.[483] The work of neuroscientist Peter Brugger also applies, as those whose brains are 'right-brain dominant' may be more susceptible to religious beliefs and also to mental illnesses.[484] Neurological manipulations, such as that achieved by meditation, has also been linked to spiritual feelings such as 'oneness'.[485] Also, misinterpretations around the sources of intense internal feelings, such as the overwhelming positive emotions that can occur when witnessing the beauty of nature or art, for example, are likely influenced by expec-

[483]Consider the aphorism, "better safe than sorry", which incidentally is one of the key themes of Pascal's Wager. Though it is outside the scope of this project, Pascal's Wager seems to set up a false dichotomy, between Christianity on the one hand, and a strong form of atheism on the other; there are many other options. Perhaps Islam is 'true' and Christians will be condemned to Hell. Perhaps the existing god is evil and counter-intuitively punishes believers. I prefer Homer's Wager, which states that choosing the wrong god – which is easy on account of the infinitely many god-model/revelatory tradition combinations possible – is more detrimental than abstaining from making a choice. After all, if the gambler chooses wrongly, which is almost certain, he commits the great 'crimes' of disbelief *and* idolatry, as opposed to the agnostic who at least is not guilty of idolatry; she could even attempt to shift the blame for her single sin of disbelief. Homer's Wager thus highlights the importance of evidence in this decision-making. It was not the Greek poet Homer that inspired me here, but the fictional Homer Simpson. See Jim Reardon, "Homer the Heretic," in *The Simpsons* (Los Angeles, CA: FOX, 1992). For more on how humans may be hard-wired to believe, see F. LeRon Shults, *Theology after the Birth of God: Atheist Conceptions in Cognition and Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). According to my understanding, and echoing my own spiritual journey, Shults is now an atheist, after being a Christian theist, with a pantheistic stint in between. Again recall the earlier note about Plantinga's evolutionary argument against naturalism. Here, evolution seems indeed to lead us to some false beliefs, which aided our survival; a mechanism that may have influenced Plantinga's beliefs about God and about the soundness of his arguments.

[484]Peter Brugger and Christine Mohr, "The Paranormal Mind: How the Study of Anomalous Experiences and Beliefs may Inform Cognitive Neuroscience," *Cortex* 44, no. 10 (2008): 1291–1298. For more on how the natural affects alleged experiences of the supernatural, see Dan Flores, "Correlations and Conclusions: Neuroscience and the Belief in God," *Philo* 17, no. 1 (2014): 5–22.

[485]Andrew B. Newberg, Eugene G. D'Aquili, and Vince Rause, *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2001). Craig is aware of this, and asserts that these artificial experiences do "absolutely nothing to undermine the fact that there are veridical experiences". See Craig (RF), p. 50. It does not appear that there is a non-question begging way to differentiate between the two.

tations and already-existing beliefs about some god/s.[486] It would certainly be more persuasive to outsiders if the experience could be disassociated from the experiencer's enculturation.[487] It would be more impressive if the posited god happened to be unknown and/or one that the experiencer disliked, rather than a familiar god who is loving and perfect, and perhaps more convincing still if this god were the brutal god of a rival ethnic group. Craig offers no evidence or argument for why a supernatural – and particularly, a theistic or Judeo-Christian theistic – explanation for such percepts must be preferable to empirically verified naturalistic alternatives;[488] indeed, given his own comments about this 'argument', that may be the point. In any case, this point, or anything about this 'argument', will not be convincing to non-believers. It is also noted that such personal experiences are not completely investigable; the veracity of such can be neither proved nor disproved.

As an aside, there are significant pragmatic concerns that arise if experiences of God are merely assumed to be authentic. Andrea Yates, for example, killed her five children,

[486]For more on the proclivity towards and impact of pre-existing beliefs, and other psychoanalytic issues, see Sigmund Freud, Todd Dufresne, and Gregory C. Richter, *The Future of an Illusion* (London: Broadview Press, 2012). Note the likelihood that a Christian would identify a perceived spiritual threat as Satan, rather than figures they do not believe exists or have even heard of, such as Shiva, Hades, Angra Mainyu, and Quetzalcoatl. Also see Pehr Granqvist et al., "Sensed presence and mystical experiences are predicted by suggestibility, not by the application of transcranial weak complex magnetic fields," *Neuroscience Letters* 379, no. 1 (2005): 1–6. There are many more resources that make the link between contextual priming and supernaturalistic beliefs, such as: Wieteke Nieuwboer, Hein T. van Schie, and Daniël Wigboldus, "Priming with Religion and Supernatural Agency Enhances the Perception of Intentionality in Natural Phenomena," *Journal for the Cognitive Science of Religion* 2, no. 2 (2014): 97–120; Michael A. Nees and Charlotte Phillips, "Auditory Pareidolia: Effects of Contextual Priming on Perceptions of Purportedly Paranormal and Ambiguous Auditory Stimuli," *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 29, no. 1 (2015): 129–134; Michiel van Elk et al., "Priming of supernatural agent concepts and agency detection," *Religion, Brain & Behavior* 6, no. 1 (2016): 4–33. See also Mark Blagrove, Christopher C. French, and Gareth Jones, "Probabilistic reasoning, affirmative bias and belief in precognitive dreams," *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 20, no. 1 (2006): 65–83. Finally, journalist Nathan Schneider recognised that for many philosophical apologists like Anselm, Craig, and Swinburne, a conversion experience long preceded their discovery of supporting proofs, around the time of a possible 'mid-life crisis', which seems to imply that such figures began to retroactively rationalise their faith, conveniently finding evidence for their already-held religious beliefs. See the chapter, "Coming of Age", in Nathan Schneider, *God in Proof: The Story of a Search from the Ancients to the Internet* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013).

[487]Similarly, just as with alternative therapies such as crystal healing, the power of suggestion may play a role. See Christopher C. French, H. O'Donnell, and L. Williams, "Hypnotic susceptibility, paranormal belief and reports of 'crystal power'" (paper presented at the British Psychological Society Centenary Annual Conference, Glasgow, 28th-31st March 2001).

[488]The philosopher may also wonder if it is even possible to perceive what is supposedly an immaterial being. There are also difficulties in attributing an experience to an infinite or maximally great being, which is to do far more than what is required. For a related discussion on the impossibility of perceiving God as God, see Nick Zangwill, "The Myth of Religious Experience," *Religious Studies* 40, no. 1 (2004): 1–22.

after experiencing numerous delusions featuring God and Satan.[489] Similarly, Dena Schlosser mutilated her child, after supposedly hearing "voices commanding her to remove the arms of her 11-month-old daughter as a sacrifice" to her god.[490] There is also the case of serial killer Peter Sutcliffe (the 'Yorkshire Ripper') who stated that, "God encouraged me to kill people".[491] Such beliefs may have even more deleterious and far-reaching effects, such as swathes of voters electing a like-minded political leader who places restrictions on personal freedoms and unnecessarily wages war.[492] Needless to say, the aforementioned biblical genocides – if genuine – and other crimes done in the names of theistic religions were enacted after direct or indirect personal experiences of God. Despite Craig's almost nonchalant attitude towards justifying his experiential 'argument', it can be of vital importance to investigate the ultimate source for alleged divine experiences, to determine their truth-value, and to reconsider compliance with such. In some cases, it would be extremely irresponsible not to; the likes of Craig could arguably be held culpable for encouraging people, who go on to commit crimes, to over ascribe truth-value to such personal experiences.

2.7.3 Wishful Thinking

What follows is not a formulation of his experiential argument, but the claims of some of Craig's own personal experiences of God, as well as related considerations.[493] Craig believes that his internal divine interactions allow him to know that his personal faith is the true one, again seemingly betraying or diminishing the importance of the philosophical work he is best-known for:[494]

> I think that Dodwell and Plantinga are correct that, fundamentally, the way we know Christianity to be true is by the self-authenticating witness of God's Holy Spirit. Now what do I mean by that? I mean that the experience of the Holy Spirit is veridical and unmistakable (though not necessarily irresistible or indubitable) for him who has it; that such a person does not need supplementary arguments or evidence in order to know and to know

[489]Kimberly Fisher, "To Save Her Children's Souls: Theoretical Perspectives on Andrea Yates and Postpartum-Related Infanticide," *Thomas Jefferson Law Review* 25, no. 3 (2003): 599–634.

[490]Theresa Porter and Helen Gavin, "Infanticide and Neonaticide: A Review of 40 Years of Research Literature on Incidence and Causes," *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 11, no. 3 (2010): 101.

[491]Wendy Hollway, "'I Just Wanted to Kill a Woman.' Why? The Ripper and Male Sexuality," *Feminist Review* 9, no. 1 (1981): 33–40.

[492]For an overview of George W. Bush's presidency, see Robert Draper, *Dead Certain: The Presidency of George W. Bush* (New York: Free Press, 2008).

[493]The sections referred to are the most relevant from *Reasonable Faith*, which – while presenting all the other arguments so far discussed – does not outline an experiential argument per se.

[494]I refer to his evidentialism. Craig, through his philosophical work, actually intends to persuade others to take on his beliefs, to persuade those who will not to at least concede that his beliefs are not irrational, and to persuade those who share his beliefs that serious scholarship underwrites their confidence that they are in possession of the truth. Technically, that Craig thinks that he has personal experiences of God need not have negative implications for any of these ends.

> with confidence that he is in fact experiencing the Spirit of God; that such experience does not function in this case as a premise in any argument from religious experience to God, but rather is the immediate experiencing of God himself; that in certain contexts the experience of the Holy Spirit will imply the apprehension of certain truths of the Christian religion, such as "God exists," "I am condemned by God," "I am reconciled to God," "Christ lives in me," and so forth; that such an experience provides one not only with a subjective assurance of Christianity's truth, but with objective knowledge of that truth; and that arguments and evidence incompatible with that truth are overwhelmed by the experience of the Holy Spirit for him who attends fully to it.[495]

Subsequently appealing to the Bible for support, Craig seems to admit the self-defeating and/or circular nature of his *sensus divinitatus* approach, before continuing his assault on the role of argument and evidence.[496] Craig boldly asserts that "the fundamental knowledge of Christianity's truth" is the "self-authenticating witness of the Holy Spirit".[497] He claims that, "the only role left for argument and evidence to play is a subsidiary role", "Philosophy is rightly the handmaid of theology. Reason is a tool to help us better understand and defend our faith", and that the only legitimate use of reason is "ministerial" rather than "magisterial", that is, "when reason submits to and serves the gospel".[498] Despite this confirmatory bias casting serious doubt on Craig's objectivity,[499] all remaining credibility left to this 'argument', if any, is lost when he reveals his true position on the importance of evidence:

> Should a conflict arise between the witness of the Holy Spirit to the fundamental truth of the Christian faith and beliefs based on argument and evidence, then it is the former which must take precedence over the latter, not vice versa.[500]

It seems to be clear that Craig will not countenance any evidence or possibilities that work against his faith in Christian theism. It is as if Craig is sure of his conclusions, and is merely interested in finding and sharing evidence that supports them. Now Craig's – still – scant description of such experiences does not overcome the objections raised previously. Craig does meet the challenge of religious pluralism (or inconsistent revelation), however, with special pleading: the "false claims" of others does nothing to undermine his access to "genuine" *testimonium Spiritu Sancti*

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[495] Craig (RF), p. 43. On p. 190, Craig goes so far as to say that the arguments make the Christian believer "look smart".

[496] Ibid., p. 44.

[497] Ibid., p. 47.

[498] Ibid., pp. 47–48.

[499] The Christian scriptures possibly encourage confirmation bias, with the popular teaching, 'seek and ye shall find'. See Matthew 7:7–8.

[500] Craig (RF), p. 48. It would appear that Craig's beliefs are truly intended to be non-falsifiable. It is worth considering if the internal witness of the Holy Spirit would even supersede Craig's direct empirical observations, such as if he were able to personally witness a disappointingly uneventful (first) Easter morning. An online critic of Craig's claims just that; that he asked such a question – involving a time machine – of Craig, who allegedly responded that it must have been some sort of trick. See Mark Smith. "Contra Craig," accessed 28/2/2016, http://jcnot4me.com/page83.html. Of course, it is possible that Craig has already been tricked; it could be that an evil god tricked Craig into believing in the non-existing all-good God.

internum (internal instigations of the Holy Spirit).[501] Given his attitude towards the experiences of other religious adherents, Craig implicitly admits that those claiming personal religious experiences are generally unreliable epistemic sources. Conversely, while on his 2013 tour of Australia, Craig said that each religion needs to be considered on a case-by-case basis.[502] Whether this feeling is genuine is up for debate, however, given that he has already settled on Christianity and theism, without seriously considering alterative god-conceptions, let alone alternative religions.

For example, in a personal communication that occurred several months after his Sydney tour, Craig apprised me that he did not need any argument against pantheism: "My theistic arguments all rule out pantheism."[503] This coheres well with his earlier claim that, regarding the evidence for Jesus' miracles and resurrection, "if the latter should prove to be genuine, then we can forgo the investigation of every single counter-Christian miracle, for most of these pale into insignificance next to the Gospel miracles".[504] Note that "most of these" is not "all of these", how Craig knows this without critically examining all miracle claims is left unstated, and that he further seems to overlook the possibility that multiple miraculous and religious traditions could be simultaneously true.

Craig further surprisingly asserts that "Even those who are given no good reason to believe and many persuasive reasons to disbelieve have no excuse, because the ultimate reason they do not believe is that they have deliberately rejected God's Holy Spirit".[505] The critic could easily claim that it is the theist who simply rejects evidence to the contrary.[506] Now while none of this forms the basis for a convincing argument for the existence of God, Craig does provide yet more possible naturalistic explanations for such experiences: wishful thinking. He explains that without God, there is no immortality, no ultimate meaning, no ultimate value, and no ultimate purpose, so that humans are doomed to a desultory and/or inconsistent life.[507] Craig

[501] Craig (RF), p. 49.

[502] See William Lane Craig and Peter Slezak, "Your God Raised Jesus from Death?," (Sydney: University of Technology, Sydney, 2013).

[503] William Lane Craig, personal communication, November 27, 2013.

[504] See Craig (RF), pp. 277–278.

[505] Ibid., p. 50. While unseemly, Craig's charge of culpability also assumes the truth of doxastic voluntarism, which is highly controversial. Proponents have included Thomas Aquinas, John Locke, and Søren Kierkegaard, while opponents number David Hume and Bernard Williams among their ranks. See Heinrich Wansing, "Action-Theoretic Aspects of Theory Choice," in *Logic, Epistemology and the Unity of Science*, ed. Shahid Rahman, et al. (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009), p. 420.

[506] See Neil Van Leeuwen, "Do religious "beliefs" respond to evidence?", forthcoming in *Philosophical Explorations*. Also of interest, is Neil Van Leeuwen, "Religious Credence is not Factual Belief," *Cognition* 133, no. 3 (2014): 698–715.

[507] Craig (RF), pp. 72–84. These are red herrings; if Craig were correct, it says nothing whatever of God's existence. Note also that Craig's desire to be "loved by others" may also play a role in his experiences. See Craig (OG), p. 47. Finally, the many great disagreements about meaning and the like could be counted as evidence against God, leading towards the soon to be discussed arguments from inconsistent revelations and hiddenness.

apparently finds no value in the individuals creating their own meaning, as the Nietzschean might. He also finds a "universe without moral accountability" to be "unimaginably terrible".[508] That Craig personally finds such a universe to be 'terrible' obviously has no bearing on whether such a universe exists. Indeed, that Craig feels this way about theism and naturalistic alternatives should count some against his case. He is clearly not a disinterested observer. In fact, that theists tend to like theism could generally be construed as a point against theism, as this fact would not just make it likely that theists would accept theistic claims uncritically, but alludes to reasons why theistic claims would be developed in the first place.

2.7.4 Bayesian Analysis

Craig generally offers no evidence to be examined, preferring to refer to personal experiences of the divine only generally (as of yet, none have been authenticated), and these could be explained without resorting to supernatural, and thus improbable (given background knowledge), explanations.[509] Furthermore, the fact that there exist numerous disparate religions, resulting in many different – and false – experiences of different gods, which is evidence against theism, and should result in low prior probabilities for such experiences being veridical, was inappropriately addressed.[510] Indeed, such evidence seems to support, if not naturalism,[511] a broad-minded polytheism or some form of pantheism. Since most of these experiences lead away from Craig's Christian theism,

[508]Craig (RF), p. 82.

[509]Cf. "we need not postulate any supernatural source or sources for these experiences, since they can be fully explained on purely natural grounds, by reference to otherwise familiar psychological processes and forces". See J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments For and Against the Existence of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 197.

[510]Compare with the comments of Lasonen-Aarnio, who effectively endorses a Bayesian approach: "Overall, it would be much better to follow a policy recommending the revision of belief in the light of new evidence. This is why reasonable subjects adjust their beliefs in defeat cases." See Maria Lasonen-Aarnio, "Unreasonable Knowledge," *Philosophical Perspectives* 24, no. 1 (2010): 15. Note that when I refer to evidence of false experiences, I refer to claims that have been debunked, the cognitive tendency for false positives regarding supernatural agency, and the religious diversity that necessitates that many or most – if not all – such beliefs are mistaken. Note also that Stephen Law has, independently, made a very similar case, though it is not explicitly (it is implicitly) Bayesian. The evidence he utilises in his argument against religious beliefs is the same evidence that I assert justifies a low prior in a probabilistic analysis, which incidentally serves as an example of how numerous arguments can be spun out of prior and consequent probabilities. See Stephen Law, "The X-claim argument against religious belief," *Religious Studies*, no. doi: 10.1017/S0034412516000330 (2016).

[511]If most of the interpretations of such supernatural experiences are incorrect, and they are even by an exclusivist Christian's reckoning, then these experiences count as evidence against theism or Christian theism, and it seems fairly unavoidable that there is precedent that naturalism allows for – what are perceived as – religious experiences. It could well be that all these supernaturalistic interpretations are incorrect. Indeed, that may be a properly basic belief of the naturalist, so that this sort of (not an) argument is self-defeating.

even he should acknowledge that such experiences in general probably lead to false beliefs. Previous concerns, such as the many alternatives to theism, hold, so that this 'argument' does not at all support the theistic view. Perceptions of 'lesser' polytheistic gods and a material pantheistic god may be more likely than that of the infinite and immaterial theistic God, as such god-models are not as qualitatively remote from what is typically perceived.

Naturalisms and some alternative god-concepts lack a god that intends or is able to communicate with its creations, such as various forms of deism, so that the lack of authenticated divine experiences – especially regarding non-resistant non-believers – supports them to a greater extent. That not everyone has such experiences, and that these 'non-experiences' are greater in number, swings the pendulum towards naturalism and other alternatives, and leads into an argument from hiddenness. Furthermore, many pantheistic and polytheistic alternatives better explain the evidence that is sourced from the numerous and diverse religious believers. Craig's own claimed personal experiences of God's Holy Spirit failed to overcome these issues.

I offer one final objection, related to several of the previous objections: the divine being communicating with the human may be deceitful. There is no good reason to think that such a being is necessarily good or truthful. Many religions, including various forms of Christianity, claim that there are evil spirits strolling about, looking to deceive. In fact, Craig's preferred Judeo-Christian God (this also applies to Jesus), is well documented in the biblical texts as lying and/or condoning lying.[512] With no way to determine if such beings are sincerely pedagogical, this 'argument' can certainly be considered devoid of any merit. The theist may also opt for a procrustean approach, in declaring 'other' experiences (as well as 'other' miracles) as simply being misinterpreted as communications from non-theistic gods when they are really from the God of theism. This merely begs the question. And perhaps the theist's experiences of God are really experiences of one of Zeus' emissaries, or further evidence of Loki's famed mischievousness.

2.7.5 Conclusion

Not only did this underdeveloped 'argument' fail to provide any convincing evidence of God's existence, with associated evidence seemingly more likely if God does not exist, it reduced Craig's credibility in revealing his presuppositionalism, and is further self-defeating. While simultaneously expending much effort in demonstrating the existence of God via evidence, Craig diminishes the role of evidence and argument, perhaps due in

[512]For but a handful of examples, see Genesis 27, 1 Kings 22:23, Jeremiah 4:10, 20:7, Ezekiel 14:9, 2 Thessalonians 2:11, John 7:8–10.

part to role conflict or role strain, claiming that his subjective experiences of the divine trump all; indicating that Craig is more sophist than philosopher.[513]

2.8 Concluding Remarks

Craig concludes that, "the evidence for God's existence which we have surveyed makes it more probable than not that God exists".[514] Taken as presented, as individual arguments for God's existence, all of Craig's arguments were found to be invalid, unsound, or simply not good arguments, by his own reckoning. That is to say, that the stated conclusions did not necessarily follow from the premises, and most – if not all – of the premises would not be accepted by all those that do not already believe in God. The Leibnizian cosmological argument from contingency merely assumed that the universe is unnecessary and that God is necessary. Furthermore, insofar as the necessary God is posited as the explanation for the universe, the universe would also be necessary, completely undermining the initial basis for the argument. Craig's famous *kalām* cosmological argument relied on merely intuitive assumptions of causality, and claimed that the universe had an absolute beginning – from nothing – which is not at all supported by the empirical evidence, as he claims. The *kalām* argument was also supported by an unconvincing attack on actual infinites, and relied on the truth of the unproven, and also relatively unpopular, A-Theory of time.

Craig's teleological argument from fine-tuning did not explore all alternative explanations, and ill considered the stated alternatives to design, namely necessity and chance. Neither of the two discussed alternatives was conclusively eliminated, with the chance scenario grossly misunderstood by Craig, and poorly discussed. Given that fine-tuning could occur without God, and may not obtain if God does exist, it was found that a non-mathematical approach would not aid the theist. A probabilistic approach, however, revealed that the posited fine-tuning of this universe could be considered more probable if God does not exist, since God certainly would not be constrained by notions of natural laws and physical constants. The axiological argument fared no better, simply assuming the existence of objective moral values and duties, and further assuming that this has anything to do with God. It was also discovered that Craig's formulation of the moral argument actually assumed God's existence, so that it is circular, and thus especially unconvincing to the non-believer.

[513]Cf. philosopher John Shook's claiming that, "In the end, he [Craig] thinks his mission is witnessing. I don't think he really cares about the arguments." Quoted in Schneider (GP), p. 214. For a far more substantial argument from personal religious experience, see Swinburne (EG), pp. 293–327. My criticisms of Craig's argument largely apply to Swinburne's formulation also. For a thorough critique of Swinburne's argument and its many insuperable challenges, including discussions on credulity, testimony, witness reliability, and the impossibility of perceiving an immaterial being that is radically transcendent, see Philipse (GAS), pp. 310–337.

[514]Craig (RF), p. 189.

The Plantingan ontological argument offered no evidence to consider and further relied on a false equivocation between epistemic possibility and metaphysical possibility. It was also tautological, similar to earlier formulations, as its success hinged on God – or the maximally great being – being defined as necessary, so that it necessarily existed in all possible worlds, including the actual world. Craig's experiential (not an) argument was underdeveloped, unconvincing, and failed to address numerous naturalistic explanations, as well as the problem of metaphysical excess. If all such experiences are to be considered veridical, it is unclear why the personal religious experiences by theists – particularly Christian theists – should be so privileged, with Craig's claims to the internal instigations of God's Holy Spirit being particularly unhelpful.

Craig might feel that his arguments are revolutionary, and 'merely' hinge on the truth of the premises, but the premises' truth is no small thing.[515] Note that had the arguments made fewer assumptions about God, and been sound, it is not clear that the cause of the universe, the fine-tuning, and so forth, leads to one entity, particularly one with all the attributes commonly associated with the theistic god. This may more aptly be described as a case for *supernaturalism*, rather than for theism; for *some divine reality*, rather than for the existence of God. For example, while creating the universe would no doubt be a task fit for some powerful entity, it need not necessarily be infinitely powerful or omnipotent. It seems that the only true link between these arguments is the assumption that God exists and the belief that all these arguments do point to God's existence. That Craig's arguments have failed tells only half the story. In the next part of this book, numerous problems with Craig's overall case shall be discussed, and the notion that these arguments – if largely successful – do not make obvious the existence of the theistic god shall be further developed. In particular, plausible alternatives such as pantheism shall be explored and deemed relatively more probable. Focus shall then be shifted to how Craig, content with his case for a bare theism, argues for the truth of Christian theism.

[515] As before, consider this first proposition of a possible – and logically valid – atheistic argument, 'The god of Christian theism does not exist', which leads to the unsurprising conclusion, 'Therefore, the god of Christian theism does not exist'.

Chapter 3
The Case for A-Theism

Before delving into Craig's all-important argument for his particular Christian brand of theism, it is pertinent to consider that his case for bare theism has failed for numerous reasons, even if the unsuccessful arguments were individually considered to be mostly sound and good.[1] It is not obvious that the arguments assemble themselves into a bricolage that proclaims the existence of some god or gods, or some other phenomenon, or even of the existence of some supernatural realm. Furthermore, it is important to note that they do not necessitate theism. Missing from Craig's case is an argument that either makes clear that theism is the only god-model that could obtain or that eliminates all alternatives as impossible, or at least relatively improbable. In fact, many of these alternative god-conceptions are here examined and judged as being more plausible than the very limited theistic conception. In effect, I argue here for a-theism. I even argue that theism is very improbable. Crucial issues to do with knowing how such a god (or gods) may have revealed itself to humankind shall also be mooted.

3.1 The Many Failings of Craig's Case for Theism

It was discovered that Craig's arguments are logically invalid and would be unsound even if they were not. In other words, his arguments are unambiguously 'not good' by his own reckoning. The shortcomings of Craig's arguments and overcall case for theism are varied and numerous. Due to premises that not all critics would accept, presented in illogical formulations, Craig's arguments failed at the logically deductive level. A major reason why Craig's arguments were deemed illogical concerns

[1]To clarify, several of Craig's arguments for 'some god' further attempt to associate the evidence with the 'theistic God'. These arguments failed on both counts, and this part of the book considers the alternatives to theism, if at least the arguments established the existence of 'some god'.

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plausible natural, and especially supernatural, alternatives that were rarely – sometimes not at all, regarding the latter – considered. This is no mere straw person criticism, as Craig does sometimes claim that his arguments are deductive, as evidenced in a debate with Massimo Pigliucci, where he also seems to surprisingly diminish the importance of theism as an explanatory hypothesis, which is actually crucial in an inductive case, which Craig's supposedly is and ultimately must be:

> Dr. Pigliucci uses a general argument against this to say that God is not explanatory. But notice he fails to understand the structure of my arguments. My arguments are deductive arguments, that is to say, if the premises are true, then by the laws of logic the conclusion follows inescapably. Whether you like the conclusion, whether you think it's explanatory, is irrelevant: as long as the premises are true, it follows by deductive logic that the conclusion is true.[2]

Moving on, Craig cannot merely present theism as possible, but probable. After all, he does not declare that "my beliefs are possibly true, so I invite you to adopt them, whilst abandoning your own, also possibly true beliefs". If, as anticipated, Craig only intended to present a P-inductive case, where theism would be shown to be more probable than not, he is again unsuccessful as the Bayesian analysis subsections revealed.[3] Without important background information, there is a clear lack of quantifications, so that the prior probabilities could not be determined, meaning that the posterior probabilities are unknowable. Craig effectively admits to this, which technically ends his case immediately. In *Reasonable Faith*, Craig – commendably recognising that certainty is unrealistic and unattainable – acknowledges the uses of Bayesian reasoning and is ultimately hesitant due to what he supposes are inscrutable prior probabilities; he thus prefers making inferences to the best explanation, but, perhaps realising that prior probabilities are essential, admits that "there is no guarantee that the best explanation is true. It may just be the best of a bad lot, and the true explanation remains unknown to us, outside the pool of live options we

[2]Note that Pigliucci earlier raised the concern – rightly – that the state of the evidence could falsify the theistic hypothesis. See William Lane Craig and Massimo Pigliucci. "Does God Exist? The Craig-Pigliucci Debate," accessed 03/02/2014, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/does-god-exist-the-craig-pigliucci-debate.

[3]This does seem to be Craig's primary aim: "In light of the evidence, it's more probable than not that God exists". He further indicates that he cannot "*prove*" God's existence. See Craig (RF), p. 189. On the same page, Craig indicates that the "arguments make it rational to believe that God exists", while immediately and inadvertently (he was discussing the rationality of non-believers) diminishing the importance of this claim, stating that a "person can be rational in believing something that is false". Craig goes on to say that it is the truth (in contrast with the rationality) of the various worldviews that is of interest. Furthermore, in his Sydney debate in 2013 with Lawrence Krauss, the latter asked, "Are you certain that God exists?" Craig responded with an emphatic, "No!" See William Lane Craig and Lawrence Maxwell Krauss. "Debate Transcript – Life, the Universe, and Nothing (II): Why Is There Something Rather Than Nothing?," accessed 23/12/2015, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/life-the-universe-and-nothing-why-is-there-something-rather-than-nothing. It is no small matter that while Craig obviously does not think that the probability of God's existence is 0% or 100%, he has not revealed what he thinks it may be.

have assembled."[4] It is as if Craig also anticipated the many alternative explanations that will be discussed in this part of the book.

Now if Craig only required his case for theism to be convincing at the C-inductive level, which merely adds to the probability of theism's truth, he again faced defeat, due to numerous considerations, such as his unjustified assumptions and the problematic issue of God's intentions. Simply ruminating on how God's intentions align with her goals, it became apparent that many – including naturalistic – alternatives to theism are more plausible, so that Craig's presented evidence often (if not always) argued against his preferred theistic hypothesis. As earlier mentioned, the theist could object that God is mysterious and his intentions are unknowable. That would end natural theology, however, as then there is no room for God as an explanatory hypothesis of the evidence. Whatever the state of the evidence, the theist can claim that that is how God intended it; we simply do not know that he did not have good reasons for it. As with the oft-made inadequate appeal to simplicity (of which this can be combined), this renders the God hypothesis unfalsifiable, one that is useless as an explanatory hypothesis that allows us to make predictions. Of course, without knowing God's intentions, it also cannot be known if God would want to create a universe, impart objective moral value and duties, interact with his underlings, raise a certain someone from death, and so forth. Combine the inscrutable likelihoods with the very low prior probability – already justified via the concept of the unembodied mind[5] – and theism cannot yet be argued as being probable.

Another major limitation of Craig's case for theism is that it mainly considers the evidence that is deemed advantageous to promoting the theistic theory. The case is generally lacking when it comes to arguments against God's existence, which could negate any positive probabilistic force of the arguments for God's existence. This problem of incomplete evidence means that a thorough inductive or Bayesian case for theism would be quite dissimilar to Craig's.[6] Arguments against theism and for naturalism or other alternatives could include arguments from evil and hiddenness, which shall be explained shortly. A related concern is that the evidence that is – at least supposedly – appealed to and the assumptions made, can, especially in light of related evidence, actually be utilised in arguments against God. In other words, the evidential arguments can be reversed in a sense, as disclosed in the Bayesian analysis subsections. For example, Craig's reliance on Big Bang cosmology led to the notion

[4]Craig (RF), pp. 54–55.

[5]Again, there is no compelling evidence for the existence of unembodied minds or bodiless persons. As such, there is no good reason to suppose that something unembodied or bodiless can do things like create, love, intervene, fight, punish, etc. These are all things associated with bodied minds/persons. Cf. Adel Daher, "The Coherence of God-Talk," *Religious Studies* 12, no. 4 (1976): 445–465. As such, while the possibility of this notion can be kept in mind, it cannot form the basis for a convincing probabilistic argument.

[6]While Craig may not intend his case to be explicitly Bayesian, so that it is dissimilar to Swinburne's case, it does make claims about the probability of God, so that Bayesian analyses are appropriate. It is also noted that Craig does claim to argue probabilistically, but without ever coming close to revealing his supposed posterior probabilities.

of the universe appearing from a cosmic singularity. As this is a highly chaotic and seemingly random process, it conflicts with God's supposed intentions in creating the world, and fine-tuning it, for the benefit of humans. Likewise, the evidence of our observed fine-tuning seems to argue more for God's non-existence as it would be necessary without God, but could plausibly be absent if the scenario of theism obtains.

With regards to the God-given morality appealed to in Craig's axiological argument, the complete lack of evidence for this phenomenon argues more for God's non-existence than for God's existence, as God might be expected to provide us with such, and to instruct all of us about it. The great diversity of thought about 'objective morality' also works against the theistic hypothesis. Furthermore, considerations over evil lead to a powerful argument against God's existence, as we shall soon see. Similarly, since not everybody experiences the supernatural realm, and that those that do often differ greatly in the concept of beings or gods they allegedly experience, experiential arguments can easily be adapted as also arguing against the existence of the god of theism, or even gods in general. Due to this problem, and also the problem of incomplete evidence, it is also possible that most, or even all, of Craig's arguments being sound does not raise the overall probability of God's existence over 0.5.

Perhaps one good argument that argues against God's existence, such as an argument from hiddenness, or an altered fine-tuning argument, gives more weighting to the overall probability than all the pro-God arguments combined. With a lack of transparency in Craig's apparently probabilistic case, he cannot reasonably overlook this possibility. In actuality, though the relevance is now questionable, I effectively present more probabilistic arguments for a-theism in this thesis, than Craig presents for theism. Now whether Craig's case for theism is perceived as deductive or inductive, Craig has admitted uncertainty around his premises and conclusions. Since there is also evidence against, which must be acknowledged – and properly dealt with – so as to avoid the file drawer effect, and since there are many more options to consider, a proper probabilistic analysis is unreservedly necessary, to avoid Craig merely appealing to possibility or ignorance when proclaiming theism as true or probably true. Such an evidence-focused probabilistic analysis would make Craig's arguments unnecessary and may deprive him of the ability to tergiversate. For example, Craig positively associates logical possibility with ontological possibility when it concerns the ontological argument, but inconsistently takes a negative stance when it comes to his arguing against infinites. However, despite his regular acknowledgements that he is arguing probabilistically, and his admitting that there is indeed evidence against theism, Craig does not offer such transparent analyses, for his case, or for the individual arguments.[7]

[7]Concerning the latter, combining several probable explicit and implicit premises could lead to an improbable conclusion. Cf. Alvin Plantinga, "Historical Arguments and Dwindling Probabilities: A Response to Timothy McGrew," *Philosophia Christi* 8, no. 1 (2006): 7–22.

It is by now very clear that in their present formulations, the arguments that Craig includes in his case are unsuccessful. Partly explaining the failure of these arguments is Craig's ambition in structuring them so as to include God in the conclusions, or even earlier. As hinted in the introduction, such arguments may be more convincing if they argued for a lesser conclusion. For example, the *kalām* cosmological argument could have stopped at (3), so that it is agreed that some cause is responsible for the universe's beginning. Likewise, the teleological argument would only point to some sort of design, without making comment about the identity of the designer, or even if the design was indeed the act of a personal designer. The axiomatic argument would only benignly argue for the existence of some sort of objective morality in the universe, while the experiential argument would merely demonstrate that some people experience an entity (or entities) that is very great and/or otherworldly. It is difficult to include the contingency and ontological arguments in this theorising on account of their mostly conceptual nature, though significantly improved formulations could argue that there must exist something out of necessity, and that there exists an entity of which nothing is greater, respectively. But this could just be the universe, as naturalists might prefer. Unfortunately for theists, the conclusions of such improved arguments do not necessarily lead to theism, or even to supernaturalism.

Such articulations have a greater chance of being deemed good arguments by critics, yet do not obviously yield the results Craig desires.[8] Firstly, it is not at all obvious that these arguments support each other as links in a chain, as Craig hoped, to support one overarching hypothesis.[9] Interestingly, that would not even be ideal; Craig should rather just collate the various evidences together – all of them – and consider the probability of the competing theories on that assembled evidence, which is precisely the Bayesian approach. It is secondly not clear why any of these arguments, and the case as a whole, cannot indicate purely naturalistic explanations. For example, it may be some advanced alien species that is responsible for perceived religious experiences, while the existence and beginning of the universe – which, without some god, is the greatest thing in existence – are merely brute facts and/or the results of some impersonal and natural force. Likewise, the fine-tuning of the 'physical' and 'moral' constants may have arisen out of some cosmic natural selection. Or perhaps it was another alien species that created the universe, and yet

[8]For example, the supposed cause of the universe could be an immaterial being that is not God. Even in Craig's theology there exist numerous immaterial non-God entities, such as angels and demons. In his debate with Christopher Hitchens, Craig did not want to "commit to the reality of demons", but did just that several seconds later, admitting that he believed that Jesus did exorcise such beings. See Christopher Hitchens and William Lane Craig, *Does God Exist?* (La Mirada, CA: Biola University, 2009), DVD.

[9]Apart from benign hypotheses such as that all these conclusions, and the conclusions of other arguments deemed not of interest, are necessary in a completely deterministic universe. Cf. Swinburne's – presuppositionalist – attempt to declare that even non-veridical personal experiences of the divine are veridical in truth, because everything ultimately stems from God. See Swinburne (EG), p. 320.

another that fine-tuned it. Or maybe the creation, fine-tuning, communications and so forth, are explained by a single extra-terrestrial alien race or even a single, "unimaginably powerful" alien being. Needless to say, there are numerous possible naturalistic scenarios, which are not at all ruled out by the more convincing, altered forms of Craig's arguments, or in truth, by the evidence that he grounds the arguments on.

3.2 The Problem of Naturalisms

Those expecting this to be a treatise for naturalism and against supernaturalism in general may be somewhat disappointed. Firstly, my focus is on a critique of theism, not a critique of supernaturalism. Secondly, bare supernaturalism hardly represents any of the usual stakeholders' views, so that such a generalised critique may be uninteresting and/or excessive. Thirdly, the case for naturalism over supernaturalism can actually be made very quickly, when employing an epistemic probabilistic approach. While such discourse is usually best when a specific type of supernaturalism is considered, it is reasonable to acknowledge that there is as yet absolutely no evidence of anything existing apart from the natural world. It is thus a near-certainty that when applying an epistemic probabilistic framework, naturalism is to be considered probabilistically superior.

It is not by accident that many rational people consider it the 'default position', and that many non-naturalists go about their lives as methodological or even de facto naturalists. Furthermore, given that naturalism does not propose the existence of anything apart from the natural world, it is more parsimonious, a fact that should prove decisive for those that ascribe great value to the simplicity of a hypothesis.[10] Furthermore, naturalistic hypotheses have proved to be very useful in advancing humanity's collective knowledge, and allow fairly accurate predictions to be made. If this all places too high a burden on the person who wishes to argue against naturalism, then I can only suggest that that person does not argue against naturalism. Moving forward, I shall specifically explain naturalism's probabilistic superiority over Craig's preferred brand of supernaturalism.

Up until now, this contra Craig critique has focussed on how his arguments failed to convincingly argue *against* naturalism, the view that there exist no supernatural entities. We have seen that the evidence appealed to is at least equally expected on various naturalistic hypotheses. Interestingly, the very fact that evidence, such as the fine-tuning of the universe for human life, or the fine-tuning of the universe for rape, can work on naturalistic alternatives to theism necessitates transparent probabilistic

[10]The possibility of pantheism makes this discussion more complex, for in the 'generic' pantheisms, the universe is 'divine' and there is nothing apart from it. But the focus then would shift to the other elements of pantheism, such as that the universe is 'conscious', etc. Interestingly, many generic pantheisms are much closer to naturalism than other models such as theism.

analyses, not only at the 'case level' but also at the 'argument level'. This even applies despite Craig's wanting to focus on relative likelihoods, since prior probabilities also need to be considered, and, as shall soon be explained, the prior probabilities overwhelmingly favour naturalism/s over theism and arguably over supernaturalism in general.[11]

There was also some discussion on how every single one of these arguments can be altered or accompanied by related evidences/arguments in order to argue for naturalism and/or against God's existence. In some cases, this applies to Craig's evidences and his unaltered arguments. For example, the proposed contingency of the universe would actually disprove Craig's type of theism. Also consider the overwhelming and ceaseless evidence for physical causation and *creatio ex materia*, the spatial and temporal inefficiencies of the 'human' universe and its great hostility to human life, the many incidents of 'bad design', the great disagreements – even amongst theists, and Christians – about what is moral, and the great diversity of personal religious experiences and claims of miracles.[12] Even ontological arguments can prove that a maximally great being does not exist at all, or that it is a different kind of god.[13] We shall now consider some of the most powerful, developed, and discussed arguments for atheology, or rather, *for* naturalism and against theism, beyond just slight alterations or reinterpretations of Craig's arguments that made alternatives to theism seem more plausible.[14]

It is admittedly rational to be sceptical about completely disproving theism and/or proving that some form of naturalism obtains, apart from the usual warranted scepticism about knowing almost anything with certainty; hence probabilistic analyses are preferred here. I suspect that proving with complete certainty that God's existence is impossible is probably impossible. One reason for this pessimism is that this task cannot be done empirically, at least at the present time. Yet another is that proving God's non-existence logically, by alluding to contradictions arising from the definition of God, is subject to emergency tweaking and perhaps ambiguity over what believers believe God to be, however vacuous such activity might seem.[15] The

[11] Additionally, there are not only two competing hypotheses; there are a great many naturalistic and supernaturalistic options.

[12] Concerning the later discussed case for Jesus' resurrection, it could be argued that the need for blood magic is very surprising if the god of theism exists. This would be more expected on naturalism, especially given our knowledge about primitive cultures and religious syncretism, or alternative god-models.

[13] Compare the concept of the last few sentences with what Draper calls "the fallacy of understated evidence". For more on this 'fallacy' and some additional examples, see his unpublished paper, "Partisanship and Inquiry in the Philosophy of Religion"; Paul Draper. "Collins' Case for Cosmic Design," accessed 17/01/2017, https://infidels.org/library/modern/paul_draper/no-design.html; Paul Draper, "Cumulative Cases," in *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper, and Philip L. Quinn (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 414–424.

[14] For the latter, consider the previous comments on the teleological and ontological arguments.

[15] Definitions and parts of definitions evolve, leading to much disagreement, even amongst theists, about what 'God' actually means, so that it becomes very difficult to label 'God' as incoherent. For example, there is no contradiction around God's being unable to create a rock so heavy that he

theist can also point to mere possibilities via counter-examples, to cause doubt about would-be deductive atheological arguments. These alleged contradictions would typically be faced with uncertainties, so that the probabilistic route I endorse becomes necessary. An example might be that God, who is all-knowledgeable and immaterial, should not have any knowledge since all our observations reveal that knowledge is related to physical brains, hard drives, etc. There is a chance, however small, that there can be knowledge not reliant on physical objects. Another example would be Craig's implication that God's omnipotence is of a sort that does not conflict with the phenomenon that "People freely separate themselves from God against His will."[16]

On a probabilistic approach, theists cannot hide behind nebulous concepts and appeals to possibility; they must clearly define their god, and argue probabilistically in a transparent fashion that could disprove their preferred hypothesis. Non-theists are then also given the opportunity to argue probabilistically against theism, for naturalism, and so forth. Given these many difficulties, deductive arguments like the logical argument from evil shall be largely overlooked, while inductive and abductive arguments will be considered. The first is an argument from hiddenness; a powerful argument that demonstrates how the failure of the positive arguments for God's existence can rationally lead to the positive belief that God does not exist. In other words, the lack of evidence for God, is evidence against God.

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cannot lift it, if 'omnipotence' does not allow for the impossible. This further reveals how arbitrary these definitions can be, and can also allude to God's being much more limited than originally imagined. For example, Swinburne provides a very cumbersome and ad hoc definition of omnipotence, which incidentally does not appear to be biblically based. See Swinburne (CT), p. 165. A similar 'contradiction' involves omniscience: is God, who knows everything, able to learn something new? The apologist's beliefs can also evolve. For example, Judges 1:19 indicates that the allegedly omnipotent God's plans were foiled by 'chariots of iron', which can simply prompt Judeo-Christian theists to dismiss their beliefs about biblical inerrancy, or to find some ambiguity to take refuge behind. Another apparent contradiction might allude to the conflict between God's mercy and her sense of justice, especially in light of the 'problem of Hell', which considers if an infinite punishment is acceptable for what are finite sins. Yet another conflict can arise between God's being omnipresent and God's being incorporeal. Perhaps God is not transcendent after all, and is omnipresent on account of his immanence. Also, can a necessary and eternal but omnipotent properly God kill herself, in that every trace of its essence/being/stuff is obliterated? Can the immutable but perfectly free God change his mind? Can an immutable being be loving and merciful? Another example concerns God's omnipotence and/or freedom and her omnibenevolence: is God not able/free to be/do evil? This seeming contradiction is solved by simply defining evil as something that is impossible for God to be/do. A final example: can God be necessarily perfectly good, when an entity that is as good, but non-necessarily, should be considered morally superior? See J. Gregory Keller, "On perfect goodness," *Sophia* 49, no. 1 (2010): 29–36. There are many other valid questions regarding the compossibility of God's attributes. Note also that non-theists can similarly tweak their hypotheses.

[16]Craig (OG), p. 284.

3.2.1 The Argument from Hiddenness

As Craig has made clear throughout his philosophical case, God supposedly created and fine-tuned the universe for the benefit of humans, and is desirous of interactions with them. Given Craig's belief in the importance of his evangelistic endeavours and his exclusivist views on Christianity, it is easy to deduce that he believes that God cares very much about whether or not humans are convinced of her existence.[17] Craig does indeed declare that God's "desire is that everyone be saved".[18] Craig further judges that if "we make a free and well-informed decision to reject Christ's sacrifice for our sin, then God has no choice but to give us what we deserve. God will not send us to hell – but we shall send ourselves".[19] Apart from the problem that this seemingly infringes on God's being perfectly free, this raises the interesting conundrum that, given the stakes when God is known, it may be best not to know God.

Touching on the related 'problem of hell', Craig, making it easy to interpret his case as unnecessarily supercilious or even racist, implies that God may have divided the world into 'obedient' (likely Israel and the Occident) and 'rebellious' areas (likely pre-colonialism Americas, Africa and Asia), which would justify some of God's *hiddenness* to many human races (and seemingly, in part, justify colonialism).[20] Of course, those in the New World could claim that the opposite is true, so that the deceived ones are those in Europe and the Holy Land. This would seem to align well with the evidence that those in the New World were not the ones setting up colonies in the Old World, spreading their religions there at the point of a sword, enslaving innocent people, killing innocent people, committing genocidal rape, unlawfully seizing land, stealing natural resources, and so forth.

Craig's ad hoc explanation offers nothing useful in serious considerations of God's hiddenness; it is evidence that is required. In any case, knowledge of God is purported to be a good (as well as arguably necessary), and since God does not make his existence obvious,[21] and has allowed only very poor evidence to be examined by sceptically-inclined humans, and has further failed to unite all religious people under the banner of his one true faith, it is easy to deduce that such a – supposedly

[17]Craig's Christian exclusivism is made clear throughout his work. For example, see Craig (RF), p. 24.

[18]Craig (OG), p. 272.

[19]Ibid., p. 272.

[20]Ibid., pp. 278–280. Craig supposes that these seemingly disadvantaged people would have rejected God's message even if they heard it, confidently presuming that "God is too good to allow someone to be lost due to historical or geographical accident". This ad hoc hypothesis does not overcome the objection in that it fails to raise the probability of theism (see earlier comments, on these ad hoc hypotheses being inherently less probable), and overlooks the fact that God could have at least made it *appear* that all people had a fair chance at being saved (even though many are predetermined to be damned), by making the Gospel message instantly accessible to all, so that this obstacle would not prevent educated and reasonable investigators from adopting Christian theism.

[21]This even has biblical precedent, with the Psalmist asking why God hides. See Psalms 10:1. Contrast this with Paul's claim in Romans 1:18–22.

all-powerful – god does not exist.[22] Either there is no god at all, or there exists a god who is not so narcissistic, who does not place such great importance on whether humans believe in her or not. Or this god does care, but is impotent, so that it is not God. For now, however, Craig's usual false dichotomy shall be momentarily accepted, so that only theism and naturalism are considered to be live options. A summarised *modus tollens* form of this argument from hiddenness appears below:

1. If God exists, God would make God's existence obvious to all humans.
2. God's existence is not obvious to all humans.
3. Therefore, God does not exist.

The second premise could be subject to popularity objections, but that is exactly the point of this sort of argument – God wants all people to believe, not just a handful of highly philosophically-sophisticated academics – and this premise obviously holds in the present world. It is empirically verified that significant numbers of clever and psychologically healthy people do not believe in any sort of god, often due to the lack of direct and unambiguous evidence, and many such people do believe, but not in the theistic 'God', though the latter is less relevant at present. Apologists may wish to declare that such non-believers are lying in that they actually do believe, surreptitiously[23]; or are not yet ready; or have not opened their hearts, but this is all unknowable, unnecessarily accusative, and invidious.[24] In fact, unlike some other atheists, I personally prefer theism – or at least some other form of supernaturalism – to be true; this would surely aid my case as it indicates a lack of anti-theistic bias, and possibly even a pro-theistic bias.[25] So my own lack of belief is purely a result of the lack of evidence. The crucial claim thus resides in (1).

As earlier discussed, God is all-powerful, so convincing especially non-resistant non-believers should be exceedingly easy. Whether God does or does not do a thing

[22]It is unthinkable that such a powerful being, interested in revealing itself to all, would not be able to provide empirical proof of its existence, when it provides much empirical proof of 'mere trivialities' (as contrasted with eternal salvation) such as the existence of pussy willows, and especially – in the Judeo-Christian and other traditions – has allegedly provided such empirical proofs to earlier generations. For example, see 1 Kings 18.

[23]If the theist demands credulity regarding claims of personal experiences of the supernatural, they should certainly extend at least the same courtesy to those merely being open about their non-belief.

[24]For my part, I believe that my status as a non-resistant non-believer is evidenced by my religious history. The opposite of what such apologists claim is true, in fact, with my reluctant non-belief made obvious. Originally a fundamentalist Christian, I became a liberal Christian, and then a deist. Flirting with naturalism, I found solace in pantheism, before finally acknowledging that I was an atheist of the 'de facto naturalist' variety. Also, I often prayed earnestly, not for material gain, but for God to do his will, and to strengthen my faith. It is unthinkable that such a god would then allow me to lose my faith in him, along with the soteriological benefits, and further allow me to focus my career on destroying the faith of others. In accordance with Matthew 7:7–8, I have asked, and did seek God, but found nothing, and, most importantly, was given nothing. In sincere cases like this God appears to be unjust, and quite callous.

[25]Recall that part of religion's success is that it provides things we like. Things like loving parents, meaning, and easy answers.

is determined solely by God's will. Given what Craig has revealed about God, it can indeed be said that God does intend to convince everyone of her existence. Being all-good (*a*), he loves all humans, and wishes that they all are saved (*b*), which plausibly requires that they follow her, which generally entails that they are convinced that she exists. A revelation would typically be involved, and God is usually taken to be revelatory. That this revelatory god would deny this vitally important information to many humans is unthinkable. By remaining hidden, God would bring about the very thing he seems to loathe: unbelief. This could also be argued as being a great evil, which raises questions about God's goodness.

As God is all-knowing (*c*), he realises that different people require a variety of reasons to believe (*d*). Some may be content with a mere dream, an ancient and unreliable book, or a 'warm' internal feeling for example, while others will require unambiguous empirical evidence. Given God's omnipotence (*e*) then, in addition to omniscience and omnibenevolence, the first premise seems solid, rendering this a good inductive argument against nir[26] existence. If God truly wants people to know God exists, it would be the simplest of tasks for her to reveal himself. God simply enacts what God wills (*f*).[27] Thus, the lack of evidence for God indicates that the question of God's existence, or dogmatic adherence to exclusivist and literalist religions, is not as crucial to humanity's purpose or *soteria* as Craig believes.[28] Significantly (as with miracles), the probabilistic force of this argument increases over time as more time elapses without God's revelation, and more people die unsaved (and more miraculous claims are debunked); as God's tardiness grows, so should our scepticism.

The theist may wish to claim that it is unreasonable to expect such direct evidence of God's existence, such as miracles, but this would be fallacious, blasphemous, inconsistent, and irrelevant. Fallacious as an all-powerful god who wishes to make itself manifest to us will be able to, blasphemous as this limits God's power, inconsistent as the scriptures of many theists give numerous examples of just this, and irrelevant because a good excuse for the lack of evidence does not solve the problems that are entailed by the lack of evidence. Consider also that if the intransigent theist wishes to formulate (ad hoc) convenient reasons that God may

[26]A gender neutral pronoun, commonly used by the transgendered.

[27]Elements *a-f* are expected to be uncontroversial to Craig and to most (Christian) believers. Elements *a*, *c*, and *e* are definitive properties of God, while the other elements, including the notion that belief is important to salvation, naturally follow from these properties and/or are consistent with mainline Christian beliefs. Note that this is a case (as with claims about nuclear explosions, for example) where the absence of evidence for God's existence can become convincing evidence against God's existence, particularly in a probabilistic or Bayesian analysis. On non-evidence possibly constituting evidence, see Irving M. Copi, *Introduction to Logic*, 7th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1986), p. 95. Other interesting points to consider would be God's failing to convince people that he exists while some of his followers seem able to do so, and whether any human can actually 'save' another. Concerning the latter, if only God can save a person in this way, it seems even more problematic that she does not make her existence more obvious.

[28]This lack of evidence would likely cause no concern to the deist or pandeist, with those models describing a specifically 'hidden' or 'missing' god.

have for remaining hidden, they merely transfer the implausibility from the posterior side of the probability calculation (the theory's relation to the evidence) to the anterior side (the inherent implausibility of the theory, on background knowledge).

To 'solve' the problem, the theist opts for an even less likely god, meaning that no progress has been made in raising the overall probability of God's existence. Inventing divine 'just so' excuses cannot aid theism's probability; only evidence can do that.[29] Furthermore, this approach is undermined by the very evidence this argument appeals to, so that the argument from hiddenness resists this defence and accentuates – and is accentuated by – other powerful atheistic arguments such as the argument from evil; there would be no need for excuses (and nor would there be a need for theistic arguments) if God simply ceased to hide, and, because God does hide, we are unable to determine if these excuses are good ones. One such excuse might be that God is less inclined to appear in contemporary times, which happen to coincide with greater understandings about the natural world and superior technology that allows for more convincing evidence, for some unconvincing reason such as that there is just too much sin in the world. This is mere speculation, seems unfair to contemporary peoples, and would not preclude indirect revelations through miracles wrought by God's followers, which, according to Jesus' teachings, should be somewhat expected.[30]

A particularly intriguing example is provided by Swinburne, who proposes that God must remain somewhat hidden, in order to allow human freedom in choosing between good and evil.[31] So, this 'evil' may actually be a 'good'. There are several problems with such claims about free will, apart from it being seemingly unjust, since we would hope that everybody had the same chance to make educated decisions, particularly when concerning extreme consequences. One is the assumption that free will is so valuable. Another is the potential conflict/s between divine foreknowledge and human/divine free will. It is unknown whether God and humans really do have free will, if God already knows what will happen. For example, humans could, seemingly rightly, feel aggrieved that God would punish them for crimes that he had already pre-determined and is otherwise ultimately culpable for.

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[29]This unsuccessful tactic commits the conjunction fallacy and could be termed *shifting the divine implausibility*. This is akin to gerrymandering. These excuses, at best, make no difference to the resulting posterior probability, as the increased consequent probability is offset by a decreased prior probability (the refined hypothesis takes up less of the probability space as the non-refined one). At worst, the resulting posterior probability could even be decreased, if the excuse is so implausible that it entails an even smaller prior probability. Also, other evidences that seemingly disadvantage theism include seemingly poor biological design, the unnecessary grand size and age of the universe, the anthropological evidence for the evolution of mythologies and religions, and the existence of religious diversity.

[30]See Mark 11:23 and John 14:12–14. These passages also counter the similar claim that miracles should not be expected today, due to sin or for some other such reason.

[31]Swinburne (RGI), p. 172. There seems to be something counter-intuitive and ironically anti-intellectual about opting for ignorance over education. Explanations revolving around free will also suffer from the comments made about Craig's contingency argument, that a theistic world is very probably necessary and deterministic.

Of course, if theists are mistaken about having free will, they can hardly be blamed; they quite literally had no choice in the matter.

Also, knowledge of God's existence does not necessarily nullify free will; the former is actually necessary, but is in no way sufficient, for accepting God into one's life. This apologetic approach confuses divine epistemology with divine adherence. For example, the traditional account of Lucifer's fall involves his knowing full well that God exists; the same applies to Satan's non-human followers and to some of the ancient Israelites. Some people might happily reject God, despite being aware of his existence, in order to pursue a hedonistic lifestyle; others because they simply do not like him, which is understandable when it comes to the god of the Tanakh; still others may have been deceived about other gods, and failed to solely focus on the 'real' one. It seems that if God were truly just, he would allow us all to make an educated decision, rather than refrain from appearing to non-resistant non-believers while pointlessly appearing to those who exercise their free will in choosing to reject him. Non-believers could hardly be blamed for not following God when he did not make them aware of his existence. Note that there were also those who chose to follow God after witnessing a miracle, and they did not complain about their free will being violated; nor are apologists demanding sympathy for them, decrying the 'evil' that God has wrought upon them by 'unfairly' revealing himself.[32]

It may also be a 'higher good' that people know of God's existence, and all that entails, so that they can choose to be moral for greater reasons than say, to take a chance on avoiding hellfire, *à la* Pascal. Also, it is true that many today who believe in and worship God are seemingly still free to differ greatly in their views on what God wants – and does not want – them to do. Furthermore, especially considering God's omnipotence, it should actually be easy in principle for God to make his existence known to all people, whilst preserving their freedom to follow him and his numerous laws, or to follow instead their own passions, the Devil, or other gods, real or imagined. Indeed, the more time elapses, with God not doing so, the more weight such anti-theistic arguments carry.[33]

Even if Swinburne cannot imagine how this would be achieved, surely God can figure out a way, and he is obliged to do so.[34] In fact, revealing the futility of Swinburne's argument, the Tanakh/Old Testament reveals numerous instances of God's preferred people exercising their freedom in choosing a path of 'evil', despite

[32]For example, see 1 Kings 18:38–39 and Luke 5.

[33]Cf. Sarah Adams and Jon Robson, "Does absence make atheistic belief grow stronger?," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 79, no. 1 (2016): 49–68.

[34]This is similar to how I respond in public debates to the question, "What would convince you that God exists?" I have several responses, with one of them being, "'I do not know', is a perfectly acceptable answer; what is important is that God would know what would convince me, yet has failed to do so." Another revolves around my witnessing a human's missing limb being regenerated, seconds after being prayed for in the name of Jesus. If the theist scoffs and instead points to a friend who was cured of a headache, she should be reminded that such a task would be very straightforward for an omnipotent being. Another concerns what may be the most straightforward action God could take: a theophany.

being fully aware of his existence, power and primacy.[35] Once again, this scenario seems discriminatory. Why make these ungrateful non-believers aware of God's existence via miracles and the like, and furnish them with numerous chances for repentance, when other – possibly more deserving – peoples are purposely kept ignorant? Concerning the latter, God actually impedes free will, and thus condemns them to whatever undeserved punishment he sees fit. It is not God's revealing himself that nullifies free will, but his *not* revealing himself. That evil and non-belief can be almost defined by these theists as being good also seems unfalsifiable. Good is good. Evil is good. Belief is good.[36] Non-belief is good. Like the popular – and unexpectedly dark – song says, "everything is awesome!"[37]

Any scenario can in this way be considered as being precisely what we would expect on theism.[38] God is again the answer that answers everything that answers nothing. In fact, on this sort of reasoning, Craig may as well give up on trying to convince atheists of the truth of theism, since our non-belief might actually serve some brilliant divine purpose that Craig is ignorant of; it would be wise if he abstained from meddling in what is quite possibly God's master plan. Rejecting God, blaspheming God, and serving false gods may all be good. These apologists have opened a Pandora's box. The price for such ad hoc theorising is too great, as it allows for many undesirable possibilities and completely removes the ability to know which hypothesis is true, or probably true. Ad hoc explanations, such as other speculations about God having good reasons for remaining hidden, simply cannot aid the theist here. The argument from hiddenness is a devastating argument against God's existence, especially when formulated in a Bayesian (epistemic) fashion. As with the other arguments, a Bayesian analysis makes lengthy philosophical treatises about what may be the case unnecessary. All that is relevant is that on naturalism (or other alternatives soon discussed), God's hiddenness is 100% expected; this is definitely not the case on theism, which entails a loving God that wants us to believe. Theistic 'excuses' can perhaps bump the likelihood up from 0%, but it will never get to 100%, since that would mean that we completely expect a loving God that wants us to believe to remain permanently hidden to all.

[35]Perhaps the most famed example concerns 'original sin', the origins of painful labour, a talking snake, and 'apples'. See Genesis 3. Apostasy is so rampant in the Pentateuchal books alone, that rejecting the God that one knows exists seems to be a major theme of the Old Testament.

[36]This is not always so obvious. It is hardly a testament to theism that the largest theistic organisation on the planet is so often accused of child sex abuse, protecting perpetrators, and punishing victims. For a succinct history of this ongoing issue, see Kathryn A. Dale and Judith L. Alpert, "Hiding Behind the Cloth: Child Sexual Abuse and the Catholic Church," *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse* 16, no. 3 (2007): 59–74.

[37]Shawn Patterson et al., *EVERYTHING IS AWESOME!!!* (Burbank, CA: Warner Bros., 2014), Single.

[38]Craig's argument from morality becomes especially untenable.

3.2.2 *The Argument from Inconsistent Revelations*

An argument from inconsistent revelations, which largely concerns the problem of religious pluralism, complements the above argument well, and may serve as an inverted argument from religious experience. Not only has God failed to make God's existence very obvious, what little that has been 'revealed', has been done inconsistently, or at least, in a manner that causes great confusion.[39] Confirmed by empirical – and historical – observations, there are many different religious groups claiming revelations from the one, true god. This is once again not something that a God so defined should allow. For one thing, it is entirely unfair that a handful of Middle Easterners already predisposed to such beliefs, in ancient times, were given such powerful evidence (rather than, say, the populous and relatively advanced Chinese at the time), while rational and scientific multitudes today are left to argue over highly unreliable ancient scraps and ambiguous clues.[40] It is also worth noting that there are far more 'false' experiences – and non-experiences – than 'genuine' experiences of God.

This inconsistency is even the case concerning Christianity, with its many schisms, and it should be pointed out that the Christian God's primary method of revelation, namely the book he allegedly authored, in languages that were relatively uncommon then and/or now, is so problematic that most critical scholars consider it to be the work of numerous – and uninspired – mortals. Moreover, the present situation is particularly untenable since God supposedly exists now, and not just in Ancient History, so that it is unexpected that he would have ceased communications. Furthermore, the great diversity of religions is perfectly expected on naturalism, where religions arose naturally and 'imperfectly'. This seems more consistent with there being no god at all, or one that is very cheeky or even evil.

[39] And yet God is specifically said to not be the author of confusion. See 1 Corinthians 14:33. That title seems more apt for Satan. This passage seems to conflict not only the discussed evidence, but also the Tower of Babel incident. See Genesis 11:1–9.

[40] Cf. James A. Keller, "A Moral Argument Against Miracles," *Faith and Philosophy* 12, no. 1 (1995): 54–78. Also note that the joyous festival of football that was the 2014 FIFA World Cup, watched by billions, would have been a particularly opportune event to appear at.

3.2.3 *The Argument from Evil*

In fact, another striking a-theistic argument[41] is the evidential argument from evil, or – since objective morality may not exist[42] – gratuitous suffering, an example of which appears below:

1. If God exists, gratuitous evils do not.
2. Gratuitous evils exist.
3. Therefore, God does not exist.

That an all-good God would allow so much evil has troubled theists and non-theists alike, even if the discussion were limited to natural evil.[43] While God might allow some suffering as the price paid for greater goods, he presumably will not allow *gratuitous* suffering – suffering for which there is no God-justifying reason. But much of the suffering we observe does appear to be, from a divine perspective, gratuitous, such as the outrageous pain many Jews suffered during the Holocaust.[44] There is much human and animal suffering in the world that seems completely unnecessary, and purposeless.[45] Relating to atheological considerations about fine-tuning, much historical and unnecessary suffering, via the process of evolution, could have been avoided, and for theists who believe in the perfect world to come, suffering in this world seems doubly gratuitous. As Epicurus realised, God should have the knowledge that this gratuitous suffering occurs, the will to ameliorate it, and the power to do so as well. It is thus fairly inexplicable why the gratuitous suffering continues when God exists, so that this suffering is *good evidence that God*

[41]These arguments could be combined, which Wielenberg seems to have done with his argument from apparently gratuitous suffering and abandonment. See Erik J. Wielenberg, "The parent–child analogy and the limits of skeptical theism," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 78, no. 3 (2015): 301–314.

[42]Craig does unsportingly imply that accepting that this 'evil' exists is akin to accepting an objective standard of morality, so that God's existence is actually confirmed. See Craig (OG), pp. 161–162. Also, not only does the a-theist have no need to concede that objective morality exists in order to make this argument, they could temporarily do so to discover a contradiction or how the evidence of this evil probabilistically leads to alternatives to theism.

[43]Ironically, the perception of gratuitous suffering may have played a role in the early development of ideas about deities. See Kurt Gray and Daniel M. Wegner, "Blaming God for Our Pain: Human Suffering and the Divine Mind," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 14, no. 1 (2010): 7–16.

[44]Atheists can also appeal to emotion. Another, less emotive, example: the incredible – and unnecessary – pain many animals deal with, on a daily basis. Cf. William Rowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (1979): 337.

[45]Robert Bass convincingly argues that even if we do not know gratuitous evils when we see them, the sheer number of seemingly gratuitous but actually inscrutable evils suggests that there are indeed gratuitous evils. See Robert Bass, "Many Inscrutable Evils," *Ars Disputandi* 11, no. 1 (2011): 118–132; Robert Bass, "Inscrutable evils: still numerous, still relevant," *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 75, no. 4 (2014): 379–384.

does not exist.[46] In other words, this problem lowers theism's probability, which even Richard Swinburne admits, just as Craig acknowledged that the unnecessary vastness of the universe lowers theism's probability:

> I also argued that one phenomenon – the existence of morality – that has been considered to be confirming evidence for the existence of God is not such evidence. I discussed in Chapter 11 the main argument against the existence of God from the existence of evil, and also the argument from the hiddenness of God. I argued there that the existence of the amount and kind of evil that there is in the world (evil of kinds that would be evil whether or not there was a God) were such that a perfectly good God would allow it to occur only if he also provided compensatory life and death, and (perhaps) became incarnate to share our suffering. The fact that the evil (e_n) required additional hypotheses to be added to the hypothesis of theism (h) to save it from disconfirmation meant that the evil lowered the probability of theism as such (bare theism) from its probability on the evidence taken into account previously. . . if we need to complicate theism somewhat in order to account for the amount of evil, we must put the probability that God would bring about our kind of universe a bit lower. With e as all the evidence listed so far, k as tautological background evidence, and h as the hypothesis of theism, let's say $P(e|h\&k) = 1/3$.[47]

Theists typically respond to the argument from evil by challenging the second premise. Some develop theodicies, explanations for why God allows such evils. These ad hoc explanations might involve the idea that evil is a 'test' for humankind. But this betrays God's omniscience and omnipotence; he surely would know the outcome, and could achieve his aims without such a cruel trial. Another concerns the afterlife, which is itself an unknown. Yet another concerns free will, which is also an unknown.[48] Other apologists, like Craig (we can also consider William Alston, Alvin Plantinga, and Stephen Wykstra), similarly suggest that we cannot know the second premise is true. They argue, for example, that our inability to think of reasons why God would allow the suffering we observe, so that there actually are really good outcomes, does not allow us to reasonably conclude there is no such reason.[49] But this 'sceptical theism', once again, does not solve the problem, relies on speculative ad hoc theorising (which must also allow for possibilities like God being sadistic),[50]

[46]Keep in mind that it is theism that is being discussed. The concept of karma in certain Indian polytheisms might offer a more probable option.

[47]Swinburne (EG), pp. 328–329, 338–339. Note also that Swinburne here realises that concocting excuses to salvage one's hypothesis does indeed result in a lower probability.

[48]Challenges still present themselves. For example, sceptics may wonder why it should be good that a loving God would grant one person the free will to torture another, relatively innocent person. It may also be that God is completely responsible for such things, given that people can arguably only act in accordance with how the all-knowing and all-powerful God created them. This is even more likely if the world is deterministic. Also, God could have created a world in which all people freely do good. If he simply cannot – though claiming this challenges his omnipotence – then, again, it may have been better for God not to create anything at all.

[49]Craig (OG), pp. 158–161.

[50]As before, if the speculations of theists are acceptable, it is not clear why the speculations of naturalists and alternative supernaturalists are not.

and further eliminates the possibility of demonstrating God's existence as probable.[51] Also, almost any deplorable act such as genocide and rape can thus be justified, since it might eventually result in some good.[52] In other words, sceptical theism should have us questioning what is objectively good and evil, so that we are now left with moral scepticism, and could also have us (further) questioning what we think we know about the world in general. We might also consider the wisdom in God's allowing such evil – presumably for some good – when it results in yet more evil: moral scepticism and religious scepticism leading to disbelief and eventual damnation. Indeed, the argument from evil is often taken to be the best argument against God's existence, and one that prevents some people from commencing or continuing a relationship with God.

3.2.4 Many More Problems for Theism

As with the previously discussed arguments, and ones merely hinted at (such as arguments from vastness or poor design), the argument from evil does not

[51]Regarding ad hoc theorising, Law posits an evil god who has hidden reasons for allowing some gratuitous goods. Even if we cannot see it, it's all for the worst. See Stephen Law, "The Evil-God Challenge," *Religious Studies* 46, no. 3 (2010): 353–373. Another ad hoc explanation would be the 'promise of Heaven'. Cf. Craig (OG), pp. 166–167. This raises yet more uncomfortable questions for the theist, such as "What is the evidence that Heaven exists?", "Is the reward of Heaven adequate?", "Why would God create the Universe if Heaven is so wonderful? Why not just create Heaven?", and "If the purpose of the Universe is free will, what is the purpose of Heaven? Servitude?" Cf. Philipse (GAS), pp. 299–302. Pragmatically speaking, such false hope could be considered 'evil', as it may result in a person's inaction when it comes to potentially improving their lot in life. Also consider that God could also lie to us for some greater good; his 'holy' scriptures and personal communications may be filled with deceit. Cf. Erik J. Wielenberg, "Sceptical theism and divine lies," *Religious Studies* 46, no. 4 (2010): 509–523. The theist might contend that God would – or even could – not lie, but that firstly assumes that the existing god is indeed the good God of theism, secondly violates his free will, and thirdly overlooks the reason for sceptical theism; explaining away God's committing/allowing evil due to the possibility of some greater good. Furthermore, God could simply allow us to be lied to for some greater good, so that he himself does not lie. There is actually precedent for God's allowing evils – including lies – in the Judeo-Christian tradition. In the passive sense, many believers, particularly those who uphold diabolical mimicry, believe that Satan has been allowed to form false religions, deceiving many. In the active sense, the Bible often has God allowing Satan to torment his followers, such as Job and Paul. See Job 1 and 2 Corinthians 12. Many biblical authors even accuse God of lying to them, directly, and via proxies. See 1 Kings 22:23, 2 Chronicles 18:22, Jeremiah 4:10, 20:7, Ezekiel 14:9, 2 Thessalonians 2:11. Isaiah 45:7 is also easily interpreted as meaning that God creates good and evil. Note also that the inadequate state of the biblical texts does seem consistent with an entity sowing confusion.

[52]This contradicts Craig's view that atheists have more justification for rape. See Craig (RF), p. 175. The onus is now on Craig, in his role as a theist, to explain that God definitely does not have some good but unknown/mysterious reason for wanting his followers to rape and torture innocent people. This especially seems difficult for Judeo-Christian theists. See Numbers 31 and recall Craig's apologising for Israelite genocide.

necessarily *prove* that God does not exist, but does *favour* God's non-existence. There are other evidences that indicate that the very existence of this world, complete with inhabitants who wonder if God exists, renders improbable – if not disproves – the existence of a perfect God. By how much exactly is admittedly unknown. There are other factors to consider. One is that the prior probability for the naturalistic alternatives is much higher than for theism, and many supernaturalisms in general, which rely on unproven notions such as substance dualism. Since naturalism is less complex or is simpler, in that it is less ad hoc, we should agree that it has a superior prior probability to theism. There is no direct evidence of the supernatural, and naturalisms – particularly those positing monistic and cohesive universes – involve fewer entities. When there is also no evidence that is more likely on theism, and there is evidence that is more likely on naturalism, the latter is clearly to be preferred. In other words, naturalism, compared with theism, wins on the prior side *and* the likelihood side of the equation, so that the posterior probabilities undoubtedly favour naturalism.[53]

Even with all of this overlooked, with naturalism and supernaturalism charitably granted equal priors, it must be noted that these are catch-call hypotheses. There is only one type of theism put forth as the truth by Craig, but there are infinitely many naturalistic hypotheses.[54] There are also infinitely many supernaturalistic hypotheses. So while naturalism can, considering prior probabilities only, take *at least* 50% of the probability space, theism takes only a portion of the probability space assigned to supernaturalism.[55] As such, I find it reasonable to allow that all the evidence considered thus far, makes naturalism – as a catch-all hypothesis – more robust, and more than 99% probable, with theism being less than 1% probable. And this, without properly considering the many other probabilistic points for naturalism, such as that naturalistic explanatory hypotheses have aided scientific and social progress for centuries, unlike supernaturalistic and theistic hypotheses; which arguably have held us back, do not allow for reliable predictions, and many of which have been replaced by the former.[56] Craig's theism has now been defeated many times over, though more interesting refutations await.

Despite the many difficulties for the case for supernaturalism, let us now consider that Craig's arguments have at least overcome naturalism. If it is assumed that these evidences and arguments do indicate the existence of a supernatural realm, it is still

[53]This might seem similar to Oppy's argument from dominance, though he seems to think that it is not particularly Bayesian/probabilistic. See Oppy (BAAG).

[54]This point shall be elaborated soon.

[55]Cf. Paul Draper's assertion that while naturalism and supernaturalism could be considered equally simple, theism is but one form of supernaturalism, so that naturalism is simpler. Theism is more complex, as it makes more claims about the world. See Paul Draper. "God and the Burden of Proof," accessed 17/01/2017, http://wp.patheos.com.s3.amazonaws.com/blogs/secularoutpost/files/2014/07/Draper-God-and-the-Burden-of-Proof.pdf. Interestingly, Draper also claims here that naturalism is but one form of atheism, which is in agreement with my wider definition of atheism, and its great plausibility.

[56]For example, consider shifting attitudes about the causes of mental illness and natural disasters.

not necessitated that the evidence all points to the existence of some god/s. There may be some unconscious supernatural force on which all else hangs, though this point shall not be stressed as such scenarios would seem to reduce to impersonal forms of pantheism. If it is thus assumed that there does exist some god/s, who is/are also responsible for the presented evidence, it is yet unclear why of the 'generic' types of god-concepts, the truth resides in the monotheistic family of god-models. It may be that the evidence is explained by one transcendent god, but it may also be explained by the existence of multiple transcendent gods, so that perhaps the truth is to be found among the polytheistic god-concepts. The arguments do not suggest that there exists but one being that fulfils all the roles and attributes that the conclusions imply. Perhaps an encountered god is but one of 27 gods belonging to the 42nd level of a complex hierarchy of 1517 gods (just one possible form of polytheism). Or perhaps the encountered god is some lonely and morally indifferent god (of the monotheistic type), or, considering that none of the evidence convincingly demonstrates that the alleged god/s is/are transcendent, perhaps there is a pandeistic or panentheistic god (both of the pantheistic type).

There are more challenges to come, though the ability of the theologians' arguments to identify which – if any – specific god-concept obtains is obviously crucial. While the naturalist can be content with any of the naturalistic possibilities, the classical theist is clearly more constrained. Thus, the following sections shall be devoted to exploring the numerous supernaturalistic/divine alternatives to theism, and considering their relative plausibilities. For simplicity, while 'naturalisms' referred to models involving no gods, 'polytheisms' refers to god-models involving more than one transcendent god, 'monotheisms' refers to god-conceptions involving a single transcendent god, while 'pantheisms' refers to monistic god-concepts involving one or more non-transcendent gods.[57]

3.3 The Problem of Polytheisms[58]

The honest philosopher may wonder why there could only be a single transcendent god.[59] None of these arguments for God's existence places limitations on how many gods might exist. Craig could claim that positing one god is 'simpler' than positing more than one, but that term is polysemous, it is not clear that monotheisms and polytheisms can be so compared, this says nothing of what scenario actually obtains, and this raises questions as to whether pantheisms or naturalisms are simpler still,

[57]There may be many more possibilities, including hybrid hypotheses.

[58]An expanded version of this section has been published. See Raphael Lataster and Herman Philipse, "The Problem of Polytheisms: A Serious Challenge to Theism," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 81, no. 3 (2017).

[59]The assumption of transcendence, effectively of non-monism, suits the structure of this discussion, and shall eventually be rectified.

which could ironically lead to an atheistic argument from parsimony.[60] Additionally, while positing one god may intuitively appear to be simpler than positing 602 gods, it is not so clear why the scenario involving 12,345,678,910,111,213 gods should be considered significantly simpler than that involving 12,345,678,910,111,214 gods. Consider also that while monotheism might be considered simpler than polytheism, it must be shown that this renders monotheism more probable than the polytheistic alternatives. Why assume that this sort of simplicity affects the probability of a claim's being true? The philosopher could even argue that "it is surely absurd to think that the world is more likely to be simple than complicated (unless one has certain metaphysical or theological views not usually accepted as legitimate factors in scientific inference)".[61] And if the hypothesis is indeed simpler, by how much? Alternatives are not extirpated merely because they are a little less probable.

That the plurality of gods posited by polytheistic proponents could hinder each other and cause conflict in the universe also poses no definite problems.[62] In fact, such conflicting gods may explain why there are great differences and conflicts in the universe, and on Earth; which is what many believers of old supposed. These gods could be egalitarian and democratic, dictatorial, peaceful and cooperative, combative, they may all have different powers and also different roles to play, or they may be very similar and forever compete with each other. There may be two gods (ditheism) or teams of gods, as arguably in Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, and certain Gnosticisms, which – compared to theism – may better explain the existence of evil. The available evidence rules none of these possibilities out.

The appeal to simplicity often made against alternative monotheisms, that infinite properties may be simpler than arbitrarily finite properties, may also apply to polytheism, when the focus is switched to the number of gods rather than properties. Craig's believing in one god could be setting an arbitrarily finite number; perhaps positing infinitely many gods would be 'simpler'. But the most pressing concern with the alternative polytheisms is actually one they share with the alternative monotheisms and pantheisms: there are infinitely-many possibilities. Polytheism allows for a straightforward and lucid discussion on the problem of theism's infinitely-many alternatives. After all, it is exceedingly easy to continuously imagine 'just one more' god. There may be 27 gods, but there also may be 28. Or 83. Or 84. There could even be 330,000,000 gods, but then again, there could be 330,000,001.

There is nothing logically incoherent about many of the supernaturalistic alternatives to theism. Furthermore, from a Bayesian standpoint, the probability of theism cannot be calculated or even reasonably approximated, when faced with infinitely many alternatives. In other words, theism cannot be reasonably claimed to

[60] Craig does invoke Ockham's Razor in restricting the discussion to a single cause of the universe. See Craig (RF), 152.

[61] van Fraassen (SI), p. 90.

[62] Swinburne indicates that theism is simpler than the polytheisms due to considerations such as the cooperation of many gods and the expectation of observing different deities' handiwork. See Swinburne (EG), p. 147.

be the most probable god-model, either mathematically or non-mathematically. The opposite is true, in fact. Theism is but one god-conception among an infinite sea of possible alternatives. Several straightforward calculations shall demonstrate how the probability of the truth of theism can be said to be virtually zero, even when the number of possible alternatives is arbitrarily limited to some finite number. Rather than allowing for infinitely many alternatives, the following calculations shall make use of a relative small number.

Consider the number, one googol. This is a very large number, which is commonly expressed as 10 raised to the power of 100, or the digit 1, followed by 100 zeroes.[63] This number is perhaps incomprehensively large, being far greater than the number of atoms in the observable universe. Consider, instead, one googolplex. That is, 10 raised to the power of one googol.[64] This almost ridiculously large number can be written as 10^10^100. Likewise, take googolplexian to be 1 followed by a googolplex of zeroes, or 10^10^10^100, and googolmax to be 10^10^10^10^100. Though these are undoubtedly large numbers, they pale in comparison to infinity. Consider, then, googolmax ^ googolmax ^ googolmax ^ googolmax ^ googolmax ^ googolmax ^ googolmax. Still being relatively minute, raise this number to the power of one vigintillion (10^63), then again to the power of one centillion (10^303), then to the power of one milli-millillion (10^3000003).[65]

By further raising this number to the power of Graham's number (a formerly record-breaking and ungraspable number so large it needs its own system of notation),[66] and – given our interest in religion – raising it further to the power of Asamkhyeya,[67] then finally to the power of 23,[68] an unnecessarily absurd and incomprehensible number is the result, which shall serve for these calculations.[69]

[63]This number inspired the name of the popular search engine, Google. See Google. "Our History in Depth," accessed 04/02/2014, http://www.google.com.au/about/company/history.

[64]For a dictionary on curious and interesting numbers, see David Wells, *The Penguin Dictionary of Curious and Interesting Numbers* (London: Penguin, 1987). The googol, the googolplex, and the number of particles in the universe are discussed on p. 205.

[65]Ibid., p. 202.

[66]Ibid., pp. 209–210.

[67]Wells thinks Asamkhyeya equates to 10^140. See ibid., p. 203. As is lamentably common with Western interpretations of Indian traditions, Wells may have been grossly mistaken. One Asamkhyeya may be as large as 10^74,436,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000, as explained by Bhikshu Jin Yong, which shall serve for these calculations. See Jin Yong, "How Large is One Asamkhyeya?," *Vajra Bodhi Sea* 2008, no. 462 (2008): 43.

[68]An important number to many Discordians.

[69]There is not enough room in the known universe for this absurd number to be fully written down, in standard-sized font. Astronomer William Millar agrees that this is even the case for the vastly smaller googolplex. See William Millar, *The Amateur Astronomer's Introduction to the Celestial Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 223.

For simplicity, this number, multiplied by π, shall be called, *gods number*.[70] The following calculations are actually quite charitable towards theism, as *gods number* is incomparably tiny compared to *infinity*, and will herein only apply to polytheistic alternatives, so that far fewer alternatives to theism are being considered than ought to be. Indeed, objectively, *gods number* is such an insignificantly small number, that it can be considered to be as far from infinity as is one. Now the aforementioned problem of unknown prior probabilities – both relative and absolute – requires that all possible explanations must be weighed equally, before considering the 'direct evidence'. Since the latter is also expected with many alternatives to theism (perhaps even more so), the consequent probabilities can largely be overlooked,[71] so that the entirety of the calculations required to calculate the probability of theism's truth can effectively – and charitably – be reduced to:

$$P(theism|e.b) = 1/gods\ number$$

Rounded to googolmax, rather than the standard two to four, decimal places:

$$P(theism|e.b) = 0, or\ 0\%$$

The probability that some alternative to theism obtains would be:

$$P(alternative\ to\ theism|e.b) - (gods\ number - 1)/gods\ number$$

Rounded to googolmax decimal places:

$$P(alternative\ to\ theism|e.b) = 1, or\ 100\%$$

This conclusion is inescapable.[72] The truth of theism is virtually impossible, when faced with an infinite number – or even a finite but very large number – of equally plausible alternative god-concepts. Note that even if theism could be said to be more plausible than any particular alternative (or even all of them), such as by arguing from simplicity, the sheer number of alternative god-concepts is overwhelming and *P(theism|e.b)* is still effectively zero, and *P(alternative to theism|e.b)* would still be 100%. Theism is thus exceedingly unlikely to be true, even if it is – inexplicably – considered much more likely than any other alternative. This can be

[70]The grammatical choices are intentional and respects that there may indeed be more than one god, and that an existing god may not be the God of theism. This large number was also chosen to be intentionally far greater than any number employed by Craig or his colleagues, when arguing that a naturalistic or non-theistic explanation is highly improbable, such as with his fine-tuning argument.

[71]The problem/evidence of hiddenness would certainly tip the likelihood/consequent probability scales towards deistic forms of polytheism.

[72]There are many monotheisms, ditheisms, and so forth, but we here hold all else equal, leaving us with 'metahypotheses', so that we can determine if one god is simpler than two, or three, or four, etc.

demonstrated mathematically, with the truth of theism charitably being momentarily considered as being one trillion[73] times more likely than any of the examined alternatives[74]:

$$P(theism|e.b) = 1,000,000,000,000/gods\ number$$

Rounded to googolmax decimal places:

$$P(theism|e.b) = 0$$

This is a comprehensive result, considering that no convincing argument has been presented by theists in arguing for the relative plausibility of theism and that much of the evidence contradicts it; indeed, much of the existing evidence would be expected to be more apparent in alternative scenarios. As only one example, many polytheistic god-conceptions offer greater explanatory scope than theism, with regards to explaining the personal religious experiences and claims to miracles of non-theistic (and also non-Christian) religious believers.[75] Nevertheless, the result is unmoved even if theism is said to be a trillion trillion (one septillion) times more likely than any alternative on account of its alleged simplicity, and many more decimal places were added in the rounding at the end of the calculation. It would seem then, that the problem of polytheism is insuperable, to say nothing of similar issues with the infinitely many alternative monotheisms and pantheisms.

Thus is my *argument from infinitely many alternatives*. For those who doubt calculations involving infinity and prefer my finite substitutions, the term 'infinitely' can be removed. I shall refrain from calling theism impossible, as 'almost impossible' is not 'impossible', just as 'near infinite' is not 'infinite'. Of course, many theists will object to calculating with infinities or even relatively large numbers, but that is easily addressed by considering only the one-god to five-god theories. Why prefer the one-god theory? If it is more probable, to what extent? And why not accept that the 'two-to-five-god' theory, as a catch-all of four separate hypotheses, is more probable? It may be easier to go down the very difficult deductive – rather than inductive or probabilistic – route and prove that there cannot be more than one god. In any case, the deficiencies in Craig's – and anyone else's – case for mono/theism are clear. But for the sake of argument, let us charitably accept that Craig's arguments demonstrate that only one transcendent god exists.[76] There are more, and greater, hurdles to overcome.

[73]Using the short-scale system for naming large numbers, though the results will be identical for those preferring the long-scale system.

[74]Please note that the tediousness of these calculations and descriptions is a poetic device intended to evoke feelings of deep humility and unimportance, in the face of such vastness. The number of alternatives to theism is truly staggering, and ought be overwhelming and mind-boggling.

[75]Craig generally acknowledges that hypotheses with greater explanatory scope are preferable. See Craig (RF), p. 233.

[76]This can limit the discussion of the pantheisms to those entailing only one god, though that is no great problem. Please note, however, that polytheistic pantheisms are certainly live options.

3.4 The Problem of Alternative Monotheisms[77]

There are, in fact, numerous alternatives to theism that describe the existence of one transcendent god. Positing alternative monotheisms is a simple task. The philosopher need only imagine the theistic god, for example, with one of the definitive properties altered, or removed altogether, so long as the properties in question are not known as being non-independent.[78] For example, theism entails a god that is all-good. A possible alternative would be a form of maltheism, entailing a god that is all-evil.[79] There may also be gods that are moderately, or very, good/evil.[80] Yahweh may be one of them; the Tanakh might even indicate that his ability to do evil is part of what makes him so great.[81] Clearly, many of these options better cohere with the earlier discussed finding that we live in a universe fine-tuned for rape.

An evil god that delights in keeping us in ignorance would also better explain god's hiddenness, especially when knowledge of god is considered to be a good, and better explains Judeo-Christian passages describing the Abrahamic god's willingness to 'harden' people's hearts and 'blind' their eyes.[82] Another possibility is a god that is balanced, morality-wise, and is neither good nor evil; one that is morally indifferent.[83] This scenario may also be the result of a world in which good and evil do not actually exist, so that there is no room for the existing god to be described as good or evil. Consider also how a god that is not all-good can be considered 'simpler' than one that must be.[84] Some of these non-omnibenevolent gods may even fit better with the evidence that evil or suffering exists, as philosophers might expect that an all-good God would not tolerate the existence of evil or suffering.[85]

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[77] An expanded version of this section has been published in the *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*.

[78] If not independent, several properties can be altered.

[79] Law postulates an evil god. See Stephen Law, "The Evil-God Challenge," *Religious Studies* 46, no. 3 (2010): 353–373.

[80] In fact, while advancing a cosmological argument, Gale asserted, "a necessarily existent God who essentially has all of the divine perfections is an impossible being." He reasons that "since such a being exists in every possible world and is at its greatest greatness in every one of them, given that it essentially has all of its omni-properties, in no possible world is there an instance of a purely gratuitous or unjustified evil; but, plainly, it is possible that there be such an evil, thereby engendering a contradiction." See Richard M. Gale and Alexander R. Pruss, "A new cosmological argument," *Religious Studies* 35, no. 4 (1999): 461–476.

[81] For example, see Exodus 4:11 and Lamentations 3:38.

[82] Exodus 9:12, Isaiah 6:9–10, John 12:40. Jesus seemed to think likewise, explaining why he taught in parables. See Mark 4:11–12, which, incidentally, appears to contradict John 18:19–20.

[83] Cf. Philipse (GAS), p. 250.

[84] In other words, theism claims more about God than is necessary, so posits a more complex god, which is inconsistent with the constant appeals to simplicity.

[85] I am not at all claiming that evil, or good, exists. Indeed, if there were no good and evil, it would seem that theism is impossible, as it posits a god that is all-good. Models of god that makes no such claims would still be possible. For example, a god that is 'merely' all-powerful and all-knowing.

Another property that can be tweaked is that of omnipotence. It is easy to imagine a less powerful god, such as one that is powerless to put an end to all evil; this possibly provides a god-concept that better explains the existence of evil. Similarly, there may be a god that does not have infinite or complete knowledge but has only x amount of knowledge (which could also better explain gratuitous suffering). Another god may have $x + 1$ amount of knowledge, yet another might know $x + 2$ facts, and so forth. It is easy to see how there are an infinite number of possible monotheistic god models, of which the theism is but one. So far keeping to only these three definitive properties of God, it is obvious that while there may be an all-powerful, all-knowing and all-good god, the god that exists might also be weak, stupid, and evil, or even reasonably-powerful, fairly-knowledgeable, and morally-indifferent.[86] Alternatively, qualities or properties can be added, such as omniessence, which shall be discussed further in the upcoming section on pantheism. With such additional properties, there may also be yet more spectra on which to theorise about many more alternatives. And likewise for the other presumed properties of God.

There may indeed be a god that is a 'maximally great entity', but there is no reason to suppose that there could not be a creator god that is at least slightly less great, such as Ialdabaoth, the Demiurge.[87] Indeed, there is nothing convincing in Craig's arguments, particularly the altered and more benign forms suggested above, that indicates that an existing god must have the definitive properties of God. The theist might claim that the theistic god is more probable, as it is simpler to posit a maximally great god with infinite properties, than to assign arbitrary and finite values to them.[88] Overlooking that focussing on (only) these properties seems arbitrary, the theist once again appeals to simplicity, this time regarding attributes instead of entities. But it is not known if theism would indeed be the simpler theory, or if it is, it may be irrelevant as it is not established that this sort of simplicity is conducive to truth, that it affects the prior probabilities.[89] Nor do such claims seem testable. Furthermore, simplicity might only be reasonably appealed to, when all else is equal. But all else is not equal; notions of a 'fairly good' and deistic god, for example, are more plausible – as regards the consequent side of the probability equation – in that they better explain the evidence,[90] so that it becomes somewhat irrelevant to discuss

[86]This example is specifically included to side step the possible objection that the three omni-properties of God are interdependent.

[87]For a brief description of Ialdabaoth, see Zlatko Pleše, *Poetics of the Gnostic Universe: Narrative and Cosmology in the Apocryphon of John* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 51–55.

[88]Swinburne's strategy is just that. See Swinburne (EG), p. 55. Craig offers a somewhat similar argument, unconvincingly claiming that the intuition that a quasi-maximally great being exists depends on the intuition that a maximally great being exists, so that the latter "has priority". See Craig (RF), p. 187. On p. 188, Craig endorses Swinburne's strategy.

[89]Remember that the simplicity objection works against the theist, as the simplest theory of all may be that God does not exist (as in naturalism), or that God is simply one with the universe (as in pantheism). It is also surprising that Craig does not view the 'infinite' cosmic singularity as so 'simple' that it could be the stopping point, so that the theistic explanation is unnecessary.

[90]Namely, the lack of evidence, god's hiddenness.

the simplicity of a maximally-great theistic God, particularly if it is not made clear to what extent points for cancel out points against.[91] Nor is it clear why properties such as omniessence, which would lead to pantheism, would not be attributable to a maximally great god. Before considering pantheisms, the possibility that the creator god is no longer present, or even no longer existing, shall be further considered. Since there are god-models consistent with the evidence for God's existence and yet are immune to much of the evidence against God's existence, theism faces some major challenges.

Interestingly, the appeal to simplicity, if successful, does not rule out all the monotheistic alternatives to theism. There might exist a god that is exceedingly powerful and knowledgeable, but that does not at all rule out a deistic type of god, one that does not interact or interfere with the creation.[92] For example, a god might exist that, like a voyeur, still wants others to exist and to go about their business, but feels no need to partake in the cosmic orgy, being happy to merely observe. Indeed, it is easy to imagine that such a god is far greater than the god of theism that seemingly is needy of human interaction, particularly with regards to being reminded how great he is. Indeed, not only do these appeals to simplicity not rule out deistic alternatives, they may even lead towards them.

It is certainly less parsimonious to posit a god-model that involves a revelation, or a revelation to humans. While theism demands that God revealed itself, and to us, no such 'constraints' are placed upon the 'freer' god of the deisms and quasi-deisms.[93] When the focus shifts from theism to Judeo-Christian theism, it is also easy to imagine that a deistic god is greater than the God that needs to constantly rectify the mistakes or imperfections of her creation.[94] Surely a god that is obsessed with our sexual preferences is more ad hoc than a god that cares not. And that a perfect being created by an all-powerful God could become evil seems unthinkable, as does the need for worldwide floods and divine sacrifice, as well as the notion that an all-knowing God would become disappointed with what he – all-powerful as she is – created. This same line of reasoning holds also for

[91]Craig is welcome to discuss how a deistic maximally-great god might be simpler than a deistic quasi maximally-great god, though he would likely be uninterested.

[92]William Bristow. "Enlightenment," accessed 04/02/2014, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/enlightenment. Note that Craig understands the difference between deism and his theism. See Craig (RF), pp. 249, 258. Interestingly, deism, which seems more evidentially justified, came into vogue around the time that evidence became highly valued over religious dogma.

[93]The latter shall be later discussed. I find the assumption that the revelation of the theistic God must be directed to humans to be arbitrary. It would be difficult to argue for this as necessary.

[94]Lucifer was perfect, but then was not (Ezekiel 28:15); his early companions almost immediately defied him (Genesis 3); almost everyone in the world needed to be killed (Genesis 6–9); still not content with his children in the postdiluvian world, God punishes and segregates humanity by multiplying their languages (Genesis 11); only God's physical manifestation, betrayal, torture, and 'death' on Earth could at last set the world to rights (Matthew 27, John 3:16); the latter was not, after all, the 'final solution', with God finally threatening to destroy the world, saving only a select few who are to be rewarded with the privilege of praising God's greatness and wisdom for all eternity (Revelation 5–7).

pandeism, a merging of deistic and pantheistic ideas, which has the benefit of elaborating on *why* god is 'missing'; simply put, god is dead.

Indeed, deistic god-concepts are far superior to theism when reflecting on God's hiddenness in the actual world. Given the positive associations between alternative monotheisms such as deism and those involving morally-indifferent or even evil gods on the one hand, and the evidence (such as gratuitous suffering and divine hiddenness) on the other, it would seem that theism is not even the superior choice if the options were limited to scenarios involving a single transcendent god. With the deisms, we have options that are as inherently plausible – arguably more so – but better fit the more direct evidence. Furthermore, deism seems to be more robust than theism, for if in future, all else but the existence of god is explained naturally by science, then an interventionary theistic God is unnecessary. Of course, as in an argument from parsimony, if all else but the existence of an unknown god is naturally explainable, then positing *any* god is unnecessary and overly complex. As a deistic hypothesis makes fewer claims, making it simpler in some sense, there is less that can be disconfirmed by science. Consider also the possibility of a single god that, whilst being transcendent and fully apart from the creation, is not immaterial as the God of theism is said to be. Such a god arguably coheres better with the available evidence.

If it is assumed that arguments for theism's alleged simplicity were somehow so compelling that the problems of the infinitely many polytheisms and infinitely many alternative monotheisms were overcome, an even greater challenge awaits. Theism must still contend with the pantheistic god-models, which are also infinite in number. Tellingly, were 'simplicity' accepted as being indicative of truth (it is already very charitable to assume that all these notions of simplicity are equally valid), the pantheistic (as well as naturalistic) alternatives would be considered more plausible for the very reasons that enabled theism to triumph over all other non-pantheistic god-concepts.[95]

3.5 The Problem of Pantheisms

If theism were deemed more plausible than its infinitely many polytheistic alternatives only on account of its not unnecessarily multiplying entities, then theism fails to overcome the problem of pantheism.[96] In fact, *ceteris paribus*, pantheisms are the

[95]Consider that a godless universe does not unnecessarily multiply entities, and that the hypothesised singularity – which is and would become the universe – is also said to be infinite. Note that in discussing 'godless god-models', I refer to 'naturalism', rather than 'atheism', as the latter can merely refer to a lack of belief in the theistic god, rather than a strictly godless scenario.

[96]In other words, even if all the notions of simplicity so far discussed were effectively the same, theism could be deemed somewhat more inherently plausible than the polytheisms and some of the alternative monotheisms, but would be less inherently plausible than the naturalisms and pantheisms. And as we shall see, pantheism is also victorious on the consequent side of the equation. Note that if all considerations about ad hocness and simplicity were overlooked, theism is still overcome by the sheer number of alternatives, and their superior likelihoods.

simplest and 'thus' more plausible god-concepts of all, as they posit even fewer entities and kinds of entities. While all the monotheisms – including theism – and polytheisms assumed a transcendent god or gods, many pantheistic variants posit at least one fewer entity. While theism posits a transcendent God, in addition to the universe, pantheistic alternatives partly or wholly equate God and the universe. Instead of god and the universe, there exists only the godly universe, an arguably 50% reduction in entities. Of course in this case, theism is also susceptible to the problem of naturalism, as like pantheism, naturalism posits fewer entities.[97] If theism were deemed more plausible than the infinitely many alternative monotheisms on account of the greatness and infinite nature of its god, then theism again, arguably, fails to become extricated from the challenges set by the pantheistic god-concepts, as pantheistic gods could share the same properties as the theistic God, and could incorporate yet more great-making properties such as omniessence (and perhaps infinitely many of them). For example, the supposedly infinite God of theism is 'bounded' by that which it is not (and which exists),[98] such as the universe, and possibly, 'the nothing'.[99] The monistic god/s of pantheism is/are generally boundless, including all that exists.

Furthermore, pantheistic explanations are decidedly less ad hoc (some might prefer "more modest") as, unlike theism, they do not rely on the problematic and unknown concept of 'the nothing'. Theism, with its *creatio ex nihilo*, faces challenges regarding the possibility of nothing, the 'existence' of nothing, and the mechanism of something coming from nothing. Pantheistic explanations are also less ad hoc in explaining many other streams of available evidence, such as the chaotic 'beginning' of the universe, and the supposed hiddenness and indifference of god, and further do not rely on the unproven concept of the unembodied mind. In other words, various pantheisms better fit the evidence. Since we have no evidence whatsoever of the supernatural realm, it can be tempting to simply declare that if the supernatural is appealed to, any supernatural explanation would do, so that such theories cannot be compared to find the most probable one (though this still leaves the theist in a quandary). But, arguing probabilistically, based on available evidence, alternatives to theism are obviously to be preferred.

Also, since pantheism is a 'catch-all' hypothesis, there is a specific pantheistic scenario for almost every set of evidence, making pantheism – like naturalism –

[97]It is unfortunate that Craig seems to think that naturalism is the only reasonable alternative to theism, generally ignoring the problem of pantheisms. Cf. Craig (RF), p. 180. Note also that even if the theist rejects that pantheism would be simpler regarding entities, it should at least be considered equally simple, and thus, must be dealt with accordingly.

[98]It would seem unfair to claim that the God of theism is not infinite or all-encompassing by referring to things that do not exist. Consider also that all things might exist eternally and at all times (cf. Lewis' modal realism) as a pantheistic god, mice included. Recall Craig's unsuccessful arguments against pantheism in William Lane Craig, "Pantheists in Spite of Themselves? Pannenberg, Clayton, and Shults on Divine Infinity," *American Theological Inquiry* 5, no. 1 (2012): 3–23.

[99]Cf. Philip Clayton, *The Problem of God in Modern Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), p. 125.

extraordinarily robust relative to classical theism, particularly against the sort of defeaters already levelled at theism thus far. Conversely, there is only one theistic concept – or at least one posited by individual theists like Craig[100] – and if any of the vital elements is found wanting, theism is disproved. This reveals that the theists' appeal to evidence is potentially self-defeating and also counter-productive, since if the current evidence does support theism, new evidence could very likely support another hypothesis.[101] Note that just as some atheists might become frustrated at the non-falsifiability of the claims made about a mysterious God, so too – though to an infinitely greater extent – may the theist be faced with the non-falsifiability of pantheism, whose infinite variants could prove overwhelming. For example, if it is found that god is not all-powerful, all-knowing, or all-good, theism is disproved. If god did not create the universe and/or if the universe did not have a true beginning, theism is disproved. If there is more than one god, theism is disproved. If god wishes no interactions with her creations, theism is disproved.

Not so with pantheism, which can hold in a great many scenarios. For example, and this may also apply to many polytheisms and alternative monotheisms, if it is discovered that *x* amount of gods is impossible, or that god must have or must not have *y* property, there will be a pantheistic scenario to suit.[102] The only facet in which pantheism could plausibly fail is if *creatio ex nihilo* (which is necessary on theism) were proven, though even then, pantheistic proponents could claim, perhaps tenuously, that the all-encompassing god of pantheism includes 'the nothing'. With no evidence of the nothing, let alone *creatio ex nihilo*, expected in the near future, this is something of a moot point. Whether or not the world is necessary, began to exist, is eternal, was finely-tuned for human life, demonstrates moral properties, or whether or not there exists other spiritual entities, or whether or not there exists anything immaterial, and whether or not god is transcendent (perhaps surprisingly allowable even in pantheistic scenarios, via panentheism), there is a pantheistic god-model that can obtain.

Yet another example is shared with the problem of polytheism. Many pantheistic god-concepts offer greater explanatory scope than theism, with regards to explaining

[100]Some might claim that my use of the term 'classical theism' is technically incorrect, and that I should be discussing (the very similar) 'theistic personalism'. To Craig, however, "This is a difference among brethren... I don't like the label theistic personalism... I think it is misleading to make up labels like theistic personalism and attach those to those who don't hold to Thomism. So I don't like the label." See William Lane Craig. "Is it Possible God is Not Personal?," accessed 06/07/2016, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/is-it-possible-god-is-not-personal. Appropriately, many pages on his *Reasonable Faith* website refer to his preferred god-model being 'classical theism'.

[101]In a similar vein, we can wonder if the theist would recant if we lacked the appealed to evidence, such as the evidence of the Big Bang, which we did not know about for most of human history.

[102]Pantheism as a catch-all hypothesis may be the most plausible and robust of all the god-models, apart from the non-god model that is naturalism. The pantheistic proponent need only take a particular monotheism or polytheism and imagine a pantheistic version of it. The one change that would be required, that god and the universe are of the same essence, is simpler and less ad hoc, whilst also being more in line with naturalism and science.

the personal religious experiences and claims to miracles of non-theistic (and also non-Christian) religious believers, due either to there being more than one pantheistic god and/or due to all people literally containing and experiencing the divine essence within. This allows the pantheist to brush off concerns about the gods of 'alternative religions', while the theist needs resort to special pleading. Unlike theists, pantheists do not need to invent complicated, implausible, and unjustified explanations for why the available evidence does not cohere with crucial elements of the pantheistic account; a pantheistic variant that *perfectly* aligns with the evidence is generally always possible. So not only does pantheism trump theism on issues of simplicity Craig seems to consider crucial, it also offers less ad hoc (introduces fewer new suppositions) explanatory hypotheses, which Craig also recognises as leading towards better explanations.[103] In fact, as noted earlier, since the theistic hypothesis is less plausible than pantheistic – and also deistic – hypotheses, the (disputed) simplicity of theism becomes quite irrelevant.[104] While there are infinitely many pantheistic scenarios that are possible, there are several types of pantheism recognised by scholars, which shall now be briefly discussed and differentiated for convenience.

Firstly, there is the naturalistic pantheism espoused by the World Pantheist Movement, which, while positing the interconnectedness of all things, reduces to a mere 'spiritual' and reverential form of naturalism.[105] A naturalistic pantheist's (tautological) argument for god's existence might look like this:

1. If the universe exists, then it is a god.
2. The universe exists.
3. Therefore, the universe is a god.
4. Therefore, a god exists.

With the supernatural being explicitly rejected, it seems that such a god is merely etymological, i.e., being equated with nature, so that there is little point in considering this naturalistic pantheism to be a god-model to be contrasted with alternatives, though it may lead to worthy and socially-beneficial religious endeavours in its own right. This concept is also compatible with the 'overview effect': the yearning for a more unified society experienced by some astronauts who view the Earth, externally.[106] Michael Levine also seems to endorse a naturalistic pantheism, though he attempts to stress that this is not to say that there is no god, but that there is a god who

[103]Craig (RF), p. 233.

[104]Remember that appealing to simplicity might only be helpful when all else is considered equal or if the likelihood ratio is sufficiently favourable. If important evidence were to be ignored, for example, we could be justified in believing the simpler theory that there exist only four or five elements.

[105]WPM. "Our Beliefs," accessed 05/02/2014, http://www.pantheism.net. This naturalistic pantheism has been described by Richard Dawkins as "sexed-up atheism". See Dawkins (GD), p. 18. Interestingly, he also referred to deism as "watered-down theism".

[106]Frank White, *The Overview Effect: Space Exploration and Human Evolution*, 2nd ed. (Reston, VA: American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, 1998).

is somehow divine, whilst being an impersonal and unconscious, all-inclusive unity.[107] It is arguable if such a view is still 'naturalistic', though it is still a benign concept far removed from the personal gods of the monotheisms and polytheisms thus far considered.

Such a naturalistic or relatively benign form of pantheism appears to be expressed in the *Daodejing*, commonly attributed to the sage Laozi, where the seemingly monistic Dao is said to be eternal and all-encompassing, whilst being older and greater than 'god' or the universe.[108] There may also be idealistic forms of pantheism, which might only differ from naturalistic or materialistic forms (i.e., physicalism), perceptually.[109] The all-being of naturalistic or idealistic pantheism could instead be personal, conscious and intelligent, as with the other god-conceptions discussed, which is a variant that I shall call classical pantheism.[110] This is a god that is equated with all that exists, and is conscious and possibly interventionary, but is not necessarily somewhat transcendent, as is the god of panentheism. All that exists is part of, and is, god.

Panentheism is a related concept, wherein the world is said to be *in* god.[111] The world is a part of this personal god, but there is more to god than the world. Such a god, then, both is and is not transcendent to the world.[112] In any case, there is a clear distinction with theism, as the world is of the same essence of god, as opposed to arising *ex nihilo*, due to the action or will of God. Actually, not all conceivable versions of panentheism need rely on the concept of the creation, unlike theism. The worldly portion of god may have existed eternally, just as the rest of god.

[107]Levine (Pantheism), pp. 3–5.

[108]Laozi, "The Lao Tzu (Tao-Te Ching)," in *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, trans. Wing-Tsit Chan, ed. Wing-Tsit Chan (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 141, 152. Cf. Laozi, *Tao Te Ching: A New English Version*, trans. Stephen Mitchell (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 4, 25.

[109]The main difference seemingly being that naturalistic pantheism posits god as a 'material something' while idealistic pantheism posits god as a 'spiritual something' or even an 'illusory something'. This distinction could obviously be merely perceptual, though the aim in this section is not to demonstrate the absolute plausibility of pantheism, but the relative plausibility of certain variations, compared with theism.

[110]I employ the term 'classical pantheism' as a nod to the Stoics, who, Baltzly argued, believed in such a god. See Dirk Baltzly, "Stoic Pantheism," *Sophia* 42, no. 2 (2003): 3–33. Suitable alternatives could include 'generic pantheism', and, simply, 'pantheism'.

[111]I reject and refute attempts by theologians, burdened by their presuppositions on God's needing to be non-physical, to define panentheism in a non-mereological way. See Raphael Lataster, "The Attractiveness of Panentheism – a Reply to Benedikt Paul Göcke," *Sophia* 53, no. 3 (2014): 389–395 and Raphael Lataster, "Theists Misrepresenting Panentheism – Another Reply to Benedikt Paul Göcke," *Sophia* 54, no. 1 (2015): 93–98.

[112]This seems to be the sort of model of god, or the Primordial Man, endorsed in the *Purusha Sukta*. See Purushottama Bilimoria and Ellen Stansell, "Suturing the Body Corporate (Divine and Human) in the Brahmanic Traditions," *Sophia* 49, no. 2 (2010): 239–240. Going by the historical records, monotheism and classical theism would seem to be quite the latecomers.

Panentheism seems to provide a compromise of sorts between theism and pantheism, and is very important in the history of religion.[113] Here is a god that is – at least in some way – superior to the world, though the world is god and is not completely cut off from her.[114] Another pantheistic variant is pandeism, where, like an extreme form of emanationism, a possibly personal or impersonal god *became* the universe. Such a concept could provide a compromise between pantheism and theism (some theists might admit that a pantheistic scenario obtained, pre-creation) on the one hand, and naturalism and strong atheism on the other. There is no god. If god did exist at some point, he exists no longer, qua god. All that currently exists is the universe. There is also some element of deism here, hence the term 'pan-deism', as god has seemingly vanished, post-creation.

This brief discussion on some of the many possible forms of pantheism is sufficient in merely conceptualising alternatives to theism.[115] However, these concepts are no mere musings; like theism, these broad concepts demonstrate much historical and even contemporary precedent. The monistic and personal god of classical pantheism, for example, is popular with Pagan, New Age, and New Thought religions, and is expressed in the popular *Conversations with God* books.[116] Pantheistic themes such as unity and inner divinity, exemplified by the greeting "Thou art God", are also to be found in the teachings and practices of the 'Pagan' Church of All Worlds, which is but one of many pantheistic or quasi-pantheistic new religious movements that could become influential in future.[117] Elements of pantheism can also be found among mystical streams of traditionally theistic and exclusivist faiths, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.[118]

[113]Interestingly, panentheistic themes can be gleaned from Christian writings, such as 1 Corinthians 15:28, Colossians 1:17, and Acts 17:28.

[114]It is worth noting that just as Shults switched from theism to some form of pantheism, so too has philosopher Michael Sudduth swapped theism for panentheism, and Christ for Krishna. See Michael Sudduth. "Philosophy and My Spiritual Journey," accessed 17/01/2017, http://michaelsudduth.com/philosophy-and-my-spiritual-journey.

[115]There are, of course, many more forms of pantheism (and monism) that have been postulated, but such a discussion is beyond the scope of this project. Of particular relevance are those forms that are somewhat similar to theism, particularly in positing a personal god. Also, more important than *established* forms of pantheism, in this project, are *conceivable* forms of pantheism, serving as alternatives to theism.

[116]Neale Donald Walsch, *Conversations with God: An Uncommon Dialogue, Book 1* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1996).

[117]Carole M. Cusack, "Science Fiction as Scripture: Robert A. Heinlein's Stranger in a Strange Land and the Church of All Worlds," *Literature & Aesthetics* 19, no. 2 (2009): 73, 90. Cf. Vedic adherents who affirm, "*aham Brahmasmi*", or "I am Brahman", where the Brahman is the infinite reality. See Ted Peters, "Models of God," *Philosophia* 35, no. 3 (2007): 281.

[118]Nils Bjorn Kvastad, "Pantheism and Mysticism, Part I," *Sophia* 14, no. 2 (1975): 1–15; G. J. Stokes, "Gnosticism and Modern Pantheism," *Mind* 4, no. 15 (1895): 320.

Panentheistic concepts have existed for thousands of years, and are still very popular in contemporary times, particularly among Dharmic traditions.[119] Regarding the notion that god sacrificed part or all of herself in creating the world, there are various Chinese myths about Pángǔ, a primordial being who created the universe and simultaneously destroyed himself, with his body parts said to have formed many aspects of our world.[120] This concept of the god that became the universe may be a misinterpretation of the original myths, but this concept had eventually taken root, perhaps as an elaborated legend, and nevertheless indicates a divine, transformative process. The motif of the world being formed from the bodies of slain powerful beings can also be found among Babylonian, Scandinavian, and Polynesian myths.[121] Like other forms of pantheism, pandeism is popular with New Age practitioners. In responding to physicist Leonard Mlodinow on the *Larry King Live* television program, New Age guru and best-selling author Deepak Chopra remarked:

> In fact, he says in the book that at least 10 to the power of 500 universes could possibly exist in super position of possibility at this level, which to me suggests an omniscient being. The only difference I have was God did not create the universe, God became the universe.[122]

Pantheistic concepts have also been made accessible to modern audiences, through entertainment media. One example is the 2009 film *Avatar*, which presents themes of interconnectedness, nature-worship, sustainability (balance), simplicity, and respect for all beings.[123] One scene explains that, much like a possibly indifferent pantheistic god (and perhaps as a not-so-subtle critique of monotheism), the Great Mother "does not take sides". *Avatar* had become the highest-grossing film of

[119]Ankur Barua, "God's Body at Work: Ramanuja and Panentheism," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 14, no. 1 (2010): 1–30; Purushottama Bilimoria and Ellen Stansell, "Suturing the Body Corporate (Divine and Human) in the Brahmanic Traditions," *Sophia* 49, no. 2 (2010): 237–259.

[120]Xiaodong Wu, "The Rhinoceros Totem and Pangu Myth: An Exploration of the Archetype of Pangu," *Oral Tradition* 16, no. 2 (2001): 364–380; Xiaodong Wu, "Pangu And The Origin Of The Universe," in *China's Creation and Origin Myths: Cross-Cultural Explorations in Oral and Written Traditions*, ed. Mineke Schipper, Shuxian Ye, and Hubin Yin (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

[121]L. W. King, *The Seven Tablets of Creation: The Babylonian and Assyrian Legends Concerning the Creation of the World and of Mankind* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2004), pp. 75–77, 87; David Toshio Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction: A Reappraisal of the Chaoskampf Theory in the Old Testament* (Warsaw, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), p. 194; William Morris and Eirikr Magnusson, *The Story of the Volsungs* (London: Walter Scott Press, 1888), pp. 9–10; Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 312–314.

[122]Deepak Chopra et al. "CNN Larry King Live (Transcript): Interview With Stephen Hawking; Science and Religion," accessed 07/01/2013, http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1009/10/lkl.01.html.

[123]James Cameron, *Avatar* (Los Angeles, CA: Twentieth Century Fox, 2009), Film.

all-time, which may have more to do with Colin Campbell's thesis that the West is becoming increasingly receptive towards 'Eastern' and pantheistic ideals,[124] and less to do with its special effects.[125] Popular songs such as John Lennon's *Imagine* and *One Tribe* by the Black Eyed Peas also demonstrate pantheistic thought.[126] The appeal of pantheistic god-concepts may in part be explained by perceived ecological and societal benefits, due to the inherently monistic and unifying themes,[127] as contrasted with the strict ontological distinctions and exclusivism associated with monotheistic models.[128] Given the alterity or othering and arguably pseudospeciation and dehumanisation inherent in the concept, it is easy to see how monotheism would be perceived as one of the most divisive and harmful notions in the history of history. Indeed, Historian Arnold Toynbee, who took special interest in the rise and fall of human civilisations, went so far as to argue that if humankind did not switch from monotheistic faiths towards pantheistic ones, the human race, and possibly the planet, would likely be doomed.[129]

It would seem that many pantheistic god-models are logically preferable to theism on account of their additional and infinite great-making properties and their positing of fewer entities, whilst also providing less ad hoc explanations. Such hypotheses also offer greater explanatory scope in explaining the religious experiences and miraculous claims of non-Christian religions, and, especially via pandeisms, might explain why many people do not have divine experiences. Pantheism is a catch-all

[124]Colin Campbell, "The Easternisation of the West," in *New Religious Movements: Challenge and Response*, ed. Bryan R. Wilson and Jamie Cresswell (London: Routledge, 1999); Carole M. Cusack, "The Western Reception of Buddhism: Celebrity and Popular Cultural Media as Agents of Familiarisation," *Australian Religion Studies Review* 24, no. 3 (2011): 308; Carole M. Cusack, *Invented Religions: Imagination, Fiction and Faith* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2010): 65.

[125]Ken Hillis, "From Capital to Karma: James Cameron's Avatar," *Postmodern Culture* 19, no. 3 (2009): https://doi.org/10.1353/pmc.2009.0007.

[126]John Lennon, *Imagine* (London: Apple Records, 1971), Gramophone record; William Adams et al., *One Tribe* (Santa Monica, CA: Interscope Records, 2009), The E.N.D album CD.

[127]W. S. Urquhart, "The Fascination of Pantheism," *International Journal of Ethics* 21, no. 3 (1911): 323; Michael P. Levine, "Pantheism, Ethics and Ecology," *Environmental Values* 3, no. 2 (1994): 121–138; Robert S. Corrington, "Deep Pantheism," *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 1, no. 4 (2007): 503–507.

[128]The exclusivist tendencies of monotheistic religions has been linked with religious violence. See Schwartz (CC); Avalos (FW). Some of this violence concerns idolatry and iconoclasm. See Willem van Asselt et al., eds., *Iconoclasm and Iconoclash: Struggle for Religious Identity* (Leiden: Brill, 2007). Interestingly, if some form of pantheism were true, the worship of idols – of wood, stone, and so forth – would be perfectly reasonable.

[129]Arnold Toynbee, "The Religious Background of the Present Environmental Crisis," *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 3, no. 1–4 (1972): 141–146.

hypothesis, so is also superior to theism in the sense that it is far less likely to be disconfirmed by present and future evidence. Furthermore, pantheistic concepts plausibly lead to practical benefits for the environment, humanity, and others.[130] Though it is of far less relevance, pantheistic thought has been historically prevalent and is also very popular in contemporary society. It would seem that Craig and his fellow evidentialist theists should place great importance on demonstrating that the god of the philosophical arguments is indeed the God of theism. Craig and his colleagues would be expected to conclusively rule out the possibility of pantheistic god-models, to say nothing of the alternative monotheisms and polytheisms.

3.5.1 Craig's Case against Pantheism

Craig, and other apologists, appealed to simplicity in order to overcome the many challenges presented by the possible polytheisms and alternative monotheisms. This was found to be unsuccessful, and it was unclear how deistic alternatives fared when relative simplicities were considered. Nevertheless, let us assume that the theistic hypothesis had triumphed against all those. Arguably the greatest challenge of all awaits: pantheism. Simplicity's assumed truth-conduciveness very plausibly renders many pantheisms as being more probable than theism. It is unfortunate then, that despite the many serious challenges that the pantheisms present to theists, Craig does not offer a case against their plausibilities. On being queried about the possible formation of an argument against pantheism, Craig only offered this perfunctory statement:

> My theistic arguments all rule out pantheism.[131]

Non-theists would likely expect that Craig be more assiduous in his analyses. In actuality, his contingency, teleological, and axiomatic arguments provide no obvious disadvantage to many pantheistic god-models, nor does his as-yet-undiscussed Christological argument. His ontological and experiential arguments might even favour pantheistic god concepts, as shall be discussed further over the following subsections. Only his *kalām* cosmological argument, or specifically the evidence of

[130] Apart from the potential for more evidential support for pantheisms, these benefits may be mutual. Microbiological research increasingly demonstrates that humans have many other organisms living within; organisms that come from the greater environment, and affect our health. For example, see Eugene Rosenberg and Ilana Zilber-Rosenberg, *The Hologenome Concept: Human, Animal and Plant Microbiota* (New York: Springer, 2013).

[131] William Lane Craig, personal communication, November 27, 2013. This is a similar approach to that taken by Swinburne, who also feels that his case for theism is so strong that alternatives need not be seriously considered, as revealed in a discussion with Herman Philipse. See Philipse (GAS), p. 330. That these are both personal discussions, rather than published proclamations, may be indicative of the seriousness of this pantheistic challenge to theism. Theistic philosophers might have taken a leaf out of the Roman Catholic Church's book with regards to the ideal way in which to deal with controversies: silence.

the universe's beginning *ex nihilo*, could arguably disconfirm pantheism, which would typically involve *creatio ex deo*, or no creation at all. However, as the critique of that argument revealed, Craig did not produce evidence for the absolute beginning of the universe from absolutely nothing. Craig has written an article on pantheism, though it was focussed on the issue of whether the theistic god is really finite, and offered nothing substantive in the way of argument for the relative improbability of all pantheistic god-conceptions.[132] As Schilbrack says, "one cannot make comparative claims about the superiority of one's position unless one actually compares".[133]

As such, it is disappointing that Craig has been unable to adequately argue for the truth of theism, given his individual arguments, or argue against the plausibility of the many possible pantheistic god-concepts. It is suspected that his conviction that he has proven the truth of theism justifies in his own mind his dismissive attitude towards alternatives. Since he has not proven the existence of the theistic God, it is imperative that he diligently consider such alternatives. In lieu of further discussion on Craig's non-existent case against pantheism, attention shall be turned to his colleagues that do attempt to justify their belief that theism is the more plausible view. Of certain interest is Max Andrews, a doctoral candidate who worked as a senior writer and public relations administrator for Craig's *Reasonable Faith* ministry,[134] and is something of a protégé of Craig's.[135] On his blog, Andrews responded to a reader question, "do you know any good arguments against Pantheism using the laws of logic?"[136] After briefly touching on some historical issues, Andrews begins:

> Pantheism, I find, is very close to panentheism. I find one to be hard pressed to make serious ontological demarcations between the other.

Proceeding to critique aspects of *panentheism* that he finds disagreeable (all now irrelevant to the question that was initially posed), Andrews reveals his ignorance not only of panentheism and classical pantheism (including labelling Carl Hartshorne a pantheist), but also of the great diversity of pantheistic god-models. Starting with the mere assumption that the existing world is contingent, Andrews criticises "pantheists" for having to "make the commitment that everything is metaphysically necessary", seemingly unaware that even on theism, the world may be – or indeed, must be – necessary. Andrews finishes by providing some reasons why he personally finds pantheism disagreeable, which is again not germane to the issue at hand, and is

[132]This shall be analysed in the following subsection. See William Lane Craig, "Pantheists in Spite of Themselves? Pannenberg, Clayton, and Shults on Divine Infinity," *American Theological Inquiry* 5, no. 1 (2012): 3–23.

[133]Schilbrack (PSR), p. 13.

[134]Max Andrews. "Curriculum Vitae," accessed 07/02/2014, http://sententias.org/cv.

[135]Max Andrews. "Thanks to William Lane Craig & Reasonable Faith," accessed 07/02/2014, http://sententias.org/2010/12/17/thanks-to-william-lane-craig-reasonable-faith.

[136]Max Andrews. "Q&A 35: Arguing with Pantheists," accessed 07/02/2014, http://sententias.org/2013/11/15/qa-35.

obvious given his personal religious beliefs. In sum, he offers no convincing argument that theism is logically or evidentially preferable.[137]

Alvin Plantinga and Richard Swinburne also offer no such argument, though Plantinga at least admits his concern that "it is not easy to see how the totality of things could be able to do or know anything at all, let alone being almighty and all-knowing".[138] However, such an argument is almost arrived at, similar to Andrews', by Oxford scholar, Benedikt Paul Göcke.[139] Unfortunately, Göcke's argument is limited to panentheism, and an idiosyncratic version at that, which pays no respect to the many and ancient (and very different) Indian forms of panentheism, and other possible alternatives. This form of 'panentheism' is almost identical to theism, differing with more historical and presently considered forms of panentheism on crucially important matters such as the mutability of God, and the composition of the universe.

For example, Göcke's panentheism, like theism, relies on the concept of *creatio ex nihilo*, which overlooks the one (arguably) necessary distinction between theism and all pantheisms, and also casually assumes – probably due to his theistic presuppositions – that god is not a mereological sum.[140] Even when these criticisms are overlooked, his overall conclusion that "panentheism is not an attractive alternative to classical theism" due to there being no "sound argument entailing the necessity of the world" is irrelevant and unsubstantiated.[141] First of all, forms of panentheism can be conceived that are identical with the theistic scenario, apart from the substance of the world, so that if the theistic universe can be called contingent, so too can the panentheistic universe. Furthermore, the world may indeed be necessary (and this may be the case even if the theistic scenario obtained, as discussed in the critique of Craig's contingency argument, which would mean that Göcke's 'panentheism' is actually theism), so that various forms of panentheism could hold the advantage.[142]

[137]Regrettably, the comments section contains an ill-tempered exchange between Andrews and myself. I was interested in arguments against pantheisms that did not rely on the claim that the pantheist must accept a necessary universe (which, as earlier discussed, may not be a point against pantheism at all), which left Andrews disappointed that I was not so interested in or convinced by his insubstantial argument. Critiquing the blog-post musings of a graduate student from Liberty University may seem out of place, but it is another reflection of the dearth of pantheistic-related discussion in analytic philosophy of religion, particularly with regards to convincing arguments against pantheistic plausibility.

[138]This is a somewhat surprising lack of imagination from the philosopher who formulated a much-revered modern version of the ontological argument, and who supposes that humans possess some sort of *sensus divinitatus*, so that the whole panoply of Christian theistic belief can be accepted, without evidence. See Alvin Plantinga, "Pantheism," in *A Companion to Metaphysics*, ed. Jaegwon Kim, Ernest Sosa, and Gary S. Rosenkrantz (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 466. Note also that most theists can actually agree with the notion that God is all-encompassing, pre-Creation.

[139]Benedikt Paul Göcke, "Panentheism and Classical Theism," *Sophia* 52, no. 1 (2013): 61–75.

[140]Ibid.: 68.

[141]Ibid.: 75.

[142]I have responded to Göcke's claims in my aforementioned *Sophia* articles, and also in several forthcoming collaborations with Purushottama Bilimoria, wherein we further clarify what panentheism is and is not. Notably, since our academic debate, Göcke has almost completely changed his view, effectively accepting that panentheism is 'more attractive' than theism.

Finally we turn to Paul Copan, who recently indicated that he "could contrast theism's greater explanatory power over Eastern pantheism and monism".[143] His attempts to do so seems to solely reside with a short chapter in his popular book, *That's Just Your Interpretation*. Therein is not a single coherent argument arguing for theism's evidential superiority over all forms of pantheism; he relies on a handful of pantheistic interpretations (or rather, misinterpretations), and essentially just states his personal preferences. Some of his underwhelming reasons for preferring theism include the confusing and ignorance-appealing "The universal amnesia regarding our divinity claimed by the monist is difficult to account for", the bizarre "The monist denies rules of logic, which is self-defeating", the multiply presupposing "It is difficult to take seriously a worldview that denies the existence of good and evil", the infantile "Eastern monism ultimately obliterates our uniqueness as persons made in the image of a personal God", and the surprising and irrelevant "Buddhism makes the odd demand that we desire the elimination of desire, which is the source of suffering".[144]

It is rather unfortunate that the critical problem of pantheism/s is not adequately dealt with by Craig or his theistic colleagues, who seem content to whimsically dismiss pantheisms on account of particular disagreeable (to the theist) aspects, or to ignore the problem that such alternatives present altogether. It is particularly disappointing that there is a lack of arguments against pantheism (or other non-naturalistic alternatives) that are as substantial and refined as the positive arguments (supposedly) for theism. Michael Levine has also noted the theistic bias inherent in much analytic philosophy of religion, considering it to be a parochial field, "having become a task undertaken by the brethren for the brethren".[145] Unfortunately, this hesitance to discuss pantheism, pandeism, and – to a lesser extent – panentheism is also reflected in the great dearth of such discussion in the contra-theistic literature, such as Oppy's *Arguing about Gods*, Sobel's *Logic and Theism*, and Philipse's otherwise excellent *God in the Age of Science?*

These books, which comprehensively critique theism, hardly mention the pantheistic alternatives, despite the significant problems they pose to the case for theism, which is something that this book attempts to rectify. Now that it has been established that pantheism offers infinitely many alternatives to theism, many of which provide superior explanations of the evidence, and that theists have largely ignored these important issues, focus shall turn to the pantheistic implications of the ontological argument, and a pandeistic case study that offers a direct probabilistic comparison with theism.

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[143]Paul Copan, "The Naturalists are Declaring the Glory of God: Discovering Natural Theology in the Unlikeliest of Places," in *Philosophy and the Christian Worldview: Analysis, Assessment and Development*, ed. David Werther and Mark D. Linville (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), p. 50.

[144]Paul Copan, *That's Just Your Interpretation: Responding to Skeptics Who Challenge Your Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), pp. 58–59.

[145]Levine (Pantheism), p. x. Schilbrack also recognises that Philosophy of Religion should be more broad. See Schilbrack (PSR).

3.5.2 *A Mereological-Ontological Argument for Existence Monism*

Both Anselm's and Plantinga's ontological arguments indicated the existence of a maximally-great being, or a being that is so great, nothing greater could be conceived. This discussion temporarily accepts that the argument is successful; a maximally-great being exists. It is the identity of that being that is now the focus. Apart from the possibility that the believer may not actually be able to conceive the true greatness of the pre-eminent God, and thus also commits idolatry,[146] somehow, this purported being is only usually considered maximally-great for a limited number of great-making properties. Theists would generally be happy to accept that possessing some power, some knowledge, some good, some presence, some essence, and some form of existence (this discussion temporarily – and perhaps necessarily – assumes that existence is a predicate), is great. For example, it is better – greater – to have some power than no power, and it is better to have knowledge of $x + 1$ things than merely x things. While being powerful and good allude to essential properties of God,[147] it must surely be the case that essence, and arguably existence, are also essential; perhaps the most essential properties of all.

Theists would also generally be happy to accept that a maximally-great being would be *infinitely* or *all*-powerful, all-knowing, all-good, and all-present (also omnitemporal). Inexplicably, this being is not supposed to be all-being or all-existing, despite the fact that it is assumedly better to have some essence and to exist, than not. It is arbitrary to declare that god must infinitely express merely some of the great-making properties, rather than all of them.[148] It is easy to claim that god should not be all-evil, as evil is not generally considered a great-making property, but it is assumed that existence is better than non-existence, just as good is better than evil. And while it is easy to associate goodness with greatness, that may not be actualised. It is not known that good is good. Goodness might not exist, or might not be indicative of greatness. If goodness is indeed illusory, then the maximally great being cannot be all-good, and the God of theism is immediately contradicted and ruled out.

The likely explanation for this *limitation* (in that God is not necessarily all-encompassing) that is placed on what is allegedly an *infinite* being, is that it leads away from theism, and to a mereological (or non-mereological, in that the whole could extend beyond the world) collective pantheism. Interestingly, divine properties that the

[146] In other words, the god that is imagined is not actually God. The same could be said for historical descriptions of God, which are arguably idols of paper. Note also that the imagined god may actually exist, but only as a concept in the believer's brain.

[147] As opposed to mere accidental properties. See Teresa Robertson and Philip Atkins. "Essential vs. Accidental Properties," accessed 13/02/2014, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/essential-accidental.

[148] Philipse understands that theists make "a somewhat arbitrary decision concerning which god would be more worthy of worship", indicating that they merely stated their "preferred nominal essence". Philipse (GAS), p. 133.

theist and pantheist may agree on, such as omniscience, may also give pantheistic hypotheses more opportunities to obtain. For example, in order for an all-knowing God to know what a person feels when they burn their hand, it might not be sufficient for God merely to understand that intense heat causes pain to human beings; God might have to *be* that person, in order to acquire the experiential knowledge. If God were not that person, its experience and knowledge thereof is only theoretical and derived, rather than perceptual and immediate.[149] This seems to undermine the claim that the God of theism is omniscient, which is to say that he does not exist.[150] Philosopher William Mander agrees that on the basis of knowledge, only a pantheistic god could exist.[151]

The oft-overlooked concept of omniessence, or omniexistentia,[152] clearly has significant implications on identifying the sort of god that exists. An omniessent god is one that is everything. It exists as all things and all things are it. There exists nothing that is not this omniessant god. Theism relies on the world existing apart from god, so is incompatible with the property of omniessence. If god were truly an infinite being, it would be difficult to overlook the property of omniessence. Indeed, theistic theologians and philosophers have grappled with similar concepts, often leading to the intuitive conclusion that the god that incorporates the universe is greater than the one that does not.[153] Various pantheistic models offer a god that is not embounded by anything (that exists), such as the world, or by 'the nothing'.

The God of theism on the other hand, is embounded by the world, and possibly by 'the nothing', depending on what the theist supposes about 'nothing'. It can be argued that the God of theism would still be infinite despite its limitations, just as a set of numbers can be infinite even if one end is restricted, such as the number zero

[149]Richard Francks, "Omniscience, Omnipotence and Pantheism," *Philosophy* 54, no. 209 (1979): 396.

[150]Similalry, the concept of omniscience could be considered incoherent if we consider how it is that an already omniscient being could know what it is like to learn something that they did not previously know.

[151]William J. Mander, "Omniscience and Pantheism," *The Heythrop Journal* 41, no. 2 (2000): 199–208.

[152]Technically these terms are different (the essence of something is what it actually is, while existence refers to whether this thing is instantiated in reality), but lead to the same conclusion when the ontological argument is considered sound. The being must have essence, if it is to exist. In other words, the omniessent being exists, and thus exists as all things.

[153]Craig is aware of this issue, and almost considers a number of fellow theologians to be pantheists in the Hegelian fashion, whilst also admitting that God must be comprised of some sort of substance. See William Lane Craig, "Pantheists in Spite of Themselves? Pannenberg, Clayton, and Shults on Divine Infinity," *American Theological Inquiry* 5, no. 1 (2012): 3–23. The article is published in various forms and may be found online, at http://www.reasonablefaith.org/pantheists-in-spite-of-themselves. Craig commits several errors in this article, such as the implication that panentheism should reduce to pantheism, which is not at all obvious. See William Rowe, "Does Panentheism Reduce to Pantheism? A Response to Craig," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 61, no. 2 (2007): 65–67. Note that Craig had several years to incorporate Rowe's critique, yet chose not to do so.

when considering the infinite set of positive numbers.[154] However, this number set is clearly not infinite in all directions, and alternatives exist that are; alternatives that, by the reckoning of ontological argument proponents, indicate that there are better candidates for the maximally-great being. While the God of theism may be 'infinite' it would not be infinite in all respects; it does not infinitely express all the great-making properties. The god of pantheism, however, is more plausibly infinite in all – or at least more – dimensions, *infinitely infinite*, so to speak.[155] And while the so-called infinite god of theism is still embounded, the god of pantheism is not. It is unembounded and perfectly free.[156]

It is worth noting that it is not known, and perhaps cannot be known, whether such properties can be expressed infinitely. However, this is no argument against pantheism, when the foundations of the ontological argument are assumed true; this is an *a priori* argument, not an evidential one. In this hypothetical scenario, it does seem very clear that a greater god than the limited god of theism can be conceived, and the latter is precisely the point that underlies such ontological arguments. They

[154]This is indeed Craig's primary strategy in addressing the issue, though he seems not to recognise that an unembounded being could be considered greater than one that is embounded. Craig also rejects that god is a mereological sum, pointing to the seemingly absurd notion that his hand and a desk form part of one object. In fact, they do. They are collections of atoms, kept apart by various forces. They are both part of the planet Earth, the Milky Way galaxy, this universe, and possibly, a pantheistic god. This is no more an absurd notion than the fact that a hair follicle and the myelin sheaths of neurons form part of one entity: a Chihuahua's body. Craig could dispute the notion of a cohesive and monistic universe, and is welcome to explain what the Earth actually comprises of, if all the humans are excluded, as well as plants, minerals, other components, and so forth. It is further surprising, given that Craig earlier spoke of the universe (one entity) as originating from the singularity (one entity). Craig's further claim that "the concept of an absolutely unlimited being is incoherent" is underdeveloped (he seems to be cavilling as the discussion could be limited to boundaries of existing substances, rather than boundaries of all logical possibilities), and irrelevant to the notion that a being with fewer limits or boundaries is surely greater. Craig says that even the pantheistic god is limited (by what it is not) pre-Creation, as it is not, say, the moon, or a mouse. Of course, if some classical pantheism obtains in this real world and there was no creation, god literally is the moon, a mouse, all mice, all men (and not just 'holy prophets'), and so forth, so is not as limited as Craig believes. He concludes the article with the claim that "God's metaphysical infinity should be understood in terms of His superlative attributes which make Him a maximally great being" which merely begs the question as to which attributes are attributed to god. See William Lane Craig, "Pantheists in Spite of Themselves? Pannenberg, Clayton, and Shults on Divine Infinity," *American Theological Inquiry* 5, no. 1 (2012): 3–23. Note also that my comments here are reminiscent of the Gaia hypothesis. See James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Recall also the implications of microbiological research that indicates that we are made up of microbes and 'human cells'. We humans may be Gaia's microbes.

[155]Note that Craig's example and ongoing discussion alludes to the superiority of a mathematical infinite that ignores the contemporary (and historical, via Georg Cantor) philosophical discussion that considers such to be transfinite and even *finite*, rather than truly infinite such as a metaphysical or absolute infinity. See Rudy Rucker, *Infinity and the Mind: The Science and Philosophy of the Infinite* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 9. For more on the limitations of mathematical infinites, see Adrian William Moore, *The Infinite*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2001).

[156]Or at least has fewer boundaries, and is freer in that sense.

concern what can be conceived, and intuitions about greatness. Since the all-encompassing god can be conceived, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that it is greater than the god that is not all-encompassing, particularly in light of Craig's insistence that a maximally-great being is preferable to a quasi-maximally-great being.[157] In this case, Craig's God is one such quasi-maximally-great being. This leads to a mereological ontological argument which assumes that 'god' + the universe would effectively be greater than god alone, so that, the true god must be 'god' + the universe.[158] In other words, the god that actually exists is a pantheistic one, and theism – which insists on God's transcendence – is logically impossible. In this monistic scenario, there is no distinction between god and the universe. There is no god distinct from the universe, and there is no universe distinct from god. Whether this 'god-universe' or 'universe-god' being is conscious or divine or supernatural (as in many forms of pantheism, some of which may be greater still due to the lack of a creation), or not (as in a monistic naturalism that looks very much like our world), is up for debate.

The theist may continue to object that god could be greater without the universe. Perhaps adding the universe to god would render god less great. Remember, however, that according to the ontological argument, essence and existence are great things.[159] Further expounding on previous points, consider that a god that knows nothing is not maximally great, nor is one that knows only one or two facts. A god that knows all or infinite things would indeed be more inclined to being maximally great.[160] Similarly, by the same token, a god that does not exist, or exists

[157]Craig (RF), p. 187.

[158]This conclusion is to avoid the scenario that god is a 'mere' part of the universe, as are humans. An alternative perspective is to consider whether god is a mere part of reality, as are humans, or is reality itself. Formerly theistic theologian LeRon Shults seemed at one point to struggle with the notion that God would only be a mere part of the whole. See F. LeRon Shults and Steven J. Sandage, *The Faces of Forgiveness: Searching for Wholeness and Salvation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), pp. 161–164.

[159]There would also be the afore-mentioned difficulty of the ad hoc theistic explanation that the perfect god would quite happily degrade the perfect world (consisting only of this perfect being) by creating an imperfect universe. This appears to be an act of evil, rather than an act of good. Though it may be counter-intuitive, it seems simpler to assume the universe is perfect; that it is exactly as the all-powerful god wishes it to be. And indeed, if the created universe is perfect, as presumably anything that the perfect god creates would be, it is again convenient to assume that the universe is god, as god would seemingly be the only thing that could be perfect.

[160]Recalling the earlier point about whether an omniscient god should be pantheistic, in any case, it seems that the pantheistic god certainly has the ability to know more than the theistic god.

only in the form of one or two microparticles should not be considered maximally great,[161] when the option is available that a god could exist, which incorporates all the planets, galaxies, universes, and whatever else might lie beyond.

While a 'bigger' or 'more substantial' god may be intuitively greater, which is certainly not insignificant where ontological arguments are concerned, there seems to be significant biblical precedent, whereby the Judeo-Christian scriptures explicitly equate size and/or substance with greatness, indicating that a certain temple or even the 'heavens' cannot contain God.[162] Moore's humorous article on the ancient perceptions of God's size and physique provides numerous biblical references, dispels the notion that God can only be seen as incorporeal, and highlights how the extra-biblical and midrashic *Shi'ur Qomah* describes God's biacromial – shoulder to shoulder – width as being nearly one billion kilometres (or 975,360,000 km, to be precise).[163] This masculine Jewish God is clearly very big, though it is worth noting that he is actually puny compared to the all-encompassing universal goddess of classical pantheism, the latter obviously being the greater god.[164] Jesus' parable of the mustard seed also indicates a general Christian appreciation of size and substance.[165]

Expanding on the microparticle concept, consider the substance of god being reduced more and more until only one microparticle of whatever substance god consists of remains. If that final microparticle is removed, god ceases to exist. Clearly, it is great for god to have this substance, and it is greater for god to have

[161] Ignoring, of course, Douglas Gasking's humorous ontological argument premised on the notion that the god that does not exist yet can still create the universe is greater than the god that can only create when existing, thereby concluding that god does not exist. See William Grey, "Gasking's Proof," *Analysis* 60, no. 4 (2000): 368–370. Also, the philosopher can speculate as to whether the theist would be comfortable with the idea that god has the substance and size of a cockroach and can be stepped on by mere mortals, or if they would much rather that god is of infinite (or maximal) size and substance. In other words, it is intuitive to conceive of god as having greater size, and also as being comprised of more essence or substance. Note also that God's supposed spiritual nature provides no exemption here, as 'microparticle' can refer to whatever it is that truly underlies God and/or the universe. The theist would be unlikely to believe that God is nothing. And if they did, *creatio ex nihilo* would literally be pantheistic.

[162] Chronicles 2:5–6. On a technical note, though this is not my only argument suggesting the primacy of a pantheistic god, the theistic philosopher might take issue with my occasionally referring to biblical precedent, when it is the god of bare theism that is being discussed. I do so only as support, and such criticisms yield an interesting dilemma. If theists wish to completely avoid referencing biblical sources in discovering the god of the philosophers, they risk this god differing greatly from the god of their preferred revealed tradition. Indeed, I argue that Yahweh is not God, throughout.

[163] Stephen D. Moore, "Gigantic God: Yahweh's Body," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 21, no. 70 (1996): 87–115. The calculation is my own. The text indicates 160,000,000 "divine" *parasangs*. Note that the Earth's equatorial diameter is less than 13,000 kilometres.

[164] The diameter of the Milky Way galaxy alone is more than 100,000 light-years, with one light-year being nearly equal to 10 trillion kilometres. See William Howard Waller, *The Milky Way: An Insider's Guide* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 82, 286.

[165] Mark 4:30–32.

more substance. It is thus maximally-great that god is all-substance.[166] Furthermore, the property of omniessence coheres and seemingly makes more likely the property of omnipresence.[167] Though the reverse is not necessitated, if god is everything then it is unavoidable that god is everywhere. While it is epistemically possible that god + the universe is a less great entity, just as adding flour and water to the sugar results in a cake that is less sweet than the sugar alone,[168] it is also possible that good is not so great or does not exist, rendering the notion of the all-good and maximally-great God of theism, incoherent. In other words, it must be stressed that the ontological argument is conceptual, and an all-encompassing god can certainly be imagined, imagined as being greater, and is not obviously less great than the god that has clear and additional limitations. It is easy to conceive that such a god is truly infinite or maximal, in all – or at least more – respects, and is thus the greater being.

There is yet some hope for the theist. Pantheistic gods create *ex deo*, or not at all.[169] The god of theism creates *ex nihilo*. Perhaps the god that can create from absolutely nothing is greater than the one that can or does not, and perhaps is cleverer also, in knowing how to do so, and in preserving itself, or at least 'more' of itself.[170] This would rely on clarifications over the nothing and whether it is metaphysically possible for something to be created from nothing.[171] As has already been indicated, the concept of *creatio ex nihilo* is completely lacking in evidence and is completely ad hoc (and may also be incoherent), while *creatio ex deo* poses no obvious

[166]Compare the microparticle with the good. It is apparently greater to be more and more good, and a maximally-great entity is all-good. By the same lights, it is reasonable that the maximally-great entity should be all-substantial also.

[167]This also coheres with the (admittedly often unjustified) intuition that 'bigger is better'. The gods of various religions and mythologies are typically titanic in size, and are rarely – if at all – portrayed as being the size of microbes.

[168]This can be explained away as a false analogy, since perhaps only the sugar is 'great', but this could also lead to an argument for panentheism. Consider Schelling's imaginative notion that "God shit out nature in order to expropriate it from Himself". See Tyler Tritten, "Nature and Freedom: Repetition as Supplement in the Late Schelling," *Sophia* 49, no. 2 (2010): 268.

[169]There is no obvious incoherence with this premise. Many birds, for example, use part of themselves, their saliva and feathers, to construct their nests. See Michael H. Hansell, *Bird Nests and Construction Behaviour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 133. It seems unthinkable to deny an omnipotent god the ability to do this, particularly when her comparatively impotent creations are able to.

[170]The opposite could also be stated. Note also that this allowance is overly generous. As mentioned, the perfect god may not create at all, so that the only possible world is one that consists solely of god. A universe containing only god is automatically a 'pantheistic universe', and theism is immediately disproved. This universe is still possible in just such a scenario, such as that this universe or multiverse, like the whole 'body' of god, is eternal, and forms a part of god's 'left ring finger' or right kidney. That the theist may struggle to imagine such a concept says nothing of its metaphysical possibility. Cf. Göcke's merely assuming that a creation occurred, and also that "God is not a mereological sum". See Benedikt Paul Göcke, "Panentheism and Classical Theism," *Sophia* 52, no. 1 (2013): 68.

[171]That there may have been a truly infinite and unembounded god pre-Creation (if the nothing truly is no-thing), who would of its own volition place limitations on itself, would also need to be overlooked.

problems, particularly when assuming that god is indeed omnipotent. While conceding that the prior probability for the theistic hypothesis is low on account of its reliance on the evidentially-unsupported *creatio ex nihilo*, theists might also claim that *creatio ex deo* lacks background knowledge and thus should also be assigned a low prior. This would be incorrect, and not only because an all-powerful god would be able to transform part or all of itself into something else, just as mere humans and other animals are able to. *Creatio ex deo* is merely a form of *creatio ex materia*, alluding to objects transforming into other objects, in 'pseudo-creations'. While there is overwhelming evidence for 'pseudo-creations', there is none for 'true creations' from nothing.

Nevertheless, with the theistic assumptions charitably accepted, this notion would result in a contradiction. It is already established that the all-encompassing god can be considered greater, yet it is now also considered that the god that can create from nothing is greater. It is often unclear how points for and against should be weighed. Given the lack of precedent for the latter, and the reasonableness of the former, I favour the pantheistic interpretation. But there might be a way for the conflict to be avoided: the portion created *ex nihilo* immediately becomes incorporated into god. If this process occurs simultaneously it is unclear if the nothing is not actually god's own essence. In other words, whether the nothing truly was no-thing, or was in actuality some manifestation of god, the pantheistic scenario eventually (rather, immediately) obtains. Theism relies not only on *creatio ex nihilo*, but also on a prolonged and sustained substantial separation between creator and created. It would thus seem unavoidable that the greatest conceivable being must be pantheistic, and that *creatio ex nihilo* is not 'truly' possible.[172] But the problem can simply be sidestepped if it is assumed that an omni-being would not create; indeed this notion coheres well with the being that already is everywhere as everything. Additionally, as is important to theistic philosophers such as Craig and Swinburne, pantheism offers *simpler* interpretations of ontological and cosmological arguments. Rather than there existing two entities, to wit, God and the universe, there is but one: the all-encompassing god.

Another objection may arise by the theist rejecting that god is a mereological sum. After all, the theist views god as immaterial, which is supposedly not comparable to

[172]In the sense that if it did occur, it may as well not have, considering the theological implications that *creatio ex nihilo* leads to here.

the material universe. But this merely begs the question, assuming substance dualism, at the very least.[173] All things, god included, have essence, and if they exist, existence. These things are not nothing, in the most austere sense of the term, as even the theist recognises; they all consist of *something*. All these things must have some sort of substance to them, whether this substance is labelled 'physical' or 'spiritual', 'material' or 'immaterial'; it must be something other than nothing. It is not at all incoherent to imagine that this distinction is illusory, to suppose monism, and to then further suppose that god is a mereological sum that incorporates the universe.[174] In other words, the totality of all that exists could be labelled 'god', with all the individual universes or multiverses somewhat serving as cells to a body. Once again, that god is an all-inclusive mereological sum can certainly be conceived, and this leads, at least intuitively if not by way of logical necessity, to a greater being than the limited god of theism. It seems that the only reasons to reject this idea as incoherent would be due to theological presuppositions, which are so prevalent among theistic scholars.[175]

If it is decided that an impasse is reached where the theist merely assumes that god cannot be a mereological sum and the pantheist merely assumes that god is a

[173] As earlier indicated, such as in §2.3, the onus would seem to lie on the theist to demonstrate the truth of substance dualism, which is completely lacking in evidence. Pantheism is less ad hoc in this sense, sharing a 'default' monistic outlook with mainstream forms of naturalism. Note that neuroscientists have never demonstrated that there is true demarcation between the mental and the physical, between the mind and the brain or body. Indeed, the opposite seems to be the case. Physically manipulating the brain often causes demonstrable changes in personality and the ability to think or reason. For example, somewhat like what is observed with dementia patients, Phineas Gage famously developed a vastly different personality after suffering physical damage to his brain. See Hanna Damasio et al., "The Return of Phineas Gage: Clues About the Brain from The Skull of a Famous Patient," *Science* 264, no. 5162 (1994): 1102–1105. Additionally, epigenetics could indicate that the mind is inherently physical, as our environmental experiences influence the physical and mental attributes of our offspring, via genetic expression. For a primer, see David S. Moore, *The Developing Genome: An Introduction to Behavioral Epigenetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). For a specific example, see Valerie S. Knopik et al., "The Epigenetics of Maternal Cigarette Smoking During Pregnancy and Effects on Child Development," *Development and Psychopathology* 24, no. 4 (2012): 1377–1390. Note also that leading philosophers of mind tend to reject substance dualism, as even Christian philosophers of religion admit. For example, see William J. Wainwright, "Theistic Mystical Experiences, Enlightenment Experiences, and Ineffability," in *Philosophy and the Christian Worldview: Analysis, Assessment and Development*, ed. Werther and Linville (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 215.

[174] Cf. Baruch Spinoza's neutral monism. See Philip Goff, ed. *Spinoza on Monism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[175] As one of the very few theistic scholars attempting to demonstrate the relative implausibility of pantheistic concepts, it is worth repeating that Göcke is only able to assume that "God is not a mereological sum, neither on classical theism nor on the panentheism I develop". His assumptions that god cannot be a mereological sum on theism or on his idiosyncratic brand of (not)panentheism says nothing about whether the god that might actually exist is or could be a mereological sum. See Benedikt Paul Göcke, "Panentheism and Classical Theism," *Sophia* 52, no. 1 (2013): 68. Note also that on p. 63 Göcke appears to explicitly reject my body-cells analogy, finding it "inadequate", despite offering no arguments for the incoherence of this concept.

mereological sum (and that such a being is greater), so be it. The neutral observer can dismiss the ontological argument as supporting theism, and there is then no credible philosophical argument that moves the discussion from some mere creative force or moral lawgiver, to a being that most would be content to call 'God'. Given, however, that imagination underlies the ontological argument, it is easy for the uncommitted analyst to favour the pantheistic or monistic interpretation. With regards to Craig's specific theistic case, the ontological argument is of the utmost importance, as there is nothing in the *kalām* or fine-tuning argument, for example, which renders a maximally-great being necessary; assuming such would violate Craig's favoured principle of Ockham's Razor. The implication of this pantheistic interpretation on *creatio ex nihilo* might also curb somewhat Craig's intentions with his *kalām* cosmological argument, which does assume a (sustained) creation from nothing. There simply is no 'nothing', and any boundaries are illusory only. There is only god, whatever god is.[176]

In conclusion, despite its being unconvincing, the ontological argument is the most important argument available to philosophers advancing the case for theism. Nevertheless, the argument if accepted naturally leads the uncommitted to pantheistic god-models. If a more traditional form of the argument is appealed to, regarding the greatest conceivable being, it is straightforward to imagine how a pantheistic god better fulfils this role. If a contemporary form is instead employed, regarding a maximally-great entity, it can only lead to theism by placing severe and arbitrary restrictions on the properties of such an entity. The pantheist would face no reasonable challenges in asserting that such a being should also be considered omniessent. Such a property not only does not conflict with the other accepted properties, but may even accentuate them. The uncommitted philosopher should be able to identify that the pantheist's god is not as limited as the theist's god, and should thus acknowledge that some forms of pantheism are logically preferable to theism.

3.5.3 Case Study: Pandeism vs. Theism

Concluding this extended discussion on the plausibility of the pantheistic catch-all hypothesis – relative to theism – is a direct comparison between one variant, pandeism, and Craig's classical theism. Just as polytheism was selected to best express the great problem of the infinitely many supernaturalistic alternatives to theism, so this broad-minded pandeism is chosen as the exemplar for the superiority of the catch-all hypothesis of pantheism. Pandeism, which is also technically a catch-all hypothesis, shall be compared with theism, on the evidence presented by Craig,

[176]Note the nuanced intentions of this subsection, which does not attempt to prove that some pantheistic god-model obtains, nor that it would if the ontological argument were sound. The aim of this subsection is for it to serve as a prolegomenon; to demonstrate that crucial yet often unjustified assumptions are made about the maximally-great entity or greatest conceivable being, by theists and pantheists alike, which render this all-important argument – even if it were sound – indecisive.

the arguments he formulated (slightly altered to remove the unjustified references to the theistic God), the evidence that Craig does not explicitly present, robustness, the criteria of simplicity that Craig finds so persuasive, and on other criteria – such as degree of ad hocness – that Craig finds useful in making judgements about which hypothesis is superior. While pandeism remains the focus, the broad-minded pantheistic variants of panentheism and classical pantheism shall be referred to on occasion.

Craig's argument from contingency concluded that the existence of god explains the evidence of the existence of the universe. The theist assumes that the universe is contingent, while god is necessary. On theism and pandeism, god can be necessary, and explains the universe, so that neither concept initially seems to have the advantage. With regards to the contingency of the universe, which is merely assumed (a classical pantheism may better explain a deterministic and necessary universe), if the theistic god can be assumed to yield a contingent universe (a problematic view, as explained in the critique of Craig's contingency argument), then there is no good reason to deny that a pandeistic – and also a panentheistic – god could also yield a contingent universe. However, since pandeism can obtain whether the universe is necessary or contingent, it is the more robust hypothesis. Craig's *kalām* cosmological argument said that the universe was caused, created, by a god. This scenario holds whether it is a theistic or pandeistic god under scrutiny.[177] No evidence was supplied that justified Craig's ad hoc belief in *creatio ex nihilo*, so pandeism, which does not rely on that assumption, ought to be favoured.

Evidence was appealed to which suggested that the 'beginning' of the world from the initial cosmic singularity (which itself seems to support a monistic view) is chaotic, so that some other world could have easily emerged. As the theistic god has clear and benevolent aims, and the pandeistic god could be indifferent, or even evil, the latter hypothesis better coheres with the evidence. Indeed, the pandeistic god could *be* the singularity,[178] conveniently allowing the pandeistic hypothesis to align with widely accepted scientific axioms regarding the conservation of mass and energy. Interestingly, the pandeistic, or at least pantheistic, concept of *spanda*, to be found in the ancient Indian school of Kashmiri Shaivism, suggests that the physical world originates from vibrations in the divine and undifferentiated potential.[179] Such ancient philosophical and

[177] If the universe was not created, then theism and pandeism are both disproved, though some form of classical pantheism or panentheism, not all of which need involve a creation, could still obtain.

[178] Or the potentiality in the quantum vacuum, possibly serving as a bridge between the 'physical' and the 'non-physical'. Also, pandeism allows for the possibility that all possible worlds emerged from the singularity, or singularities, so that all possible scenarios are actualised. Recall Lewis' modal realism. See Lewis (OPW).

[179] For more on these divine vibrations, see Vasugupta, *The Stanzas on Vibration*, trans. Mark S. G. Dyczkowski (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992); Vasugupta, *Spanda-Kārikās: The Divine Creative Pulsation*, trans. Jaideva Singh (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1980). The primordial Chaos of ancient Greek mythology, as described by Hesiod in *Theogony*, 116–122, could also be a pandeistic-type god. See Hesiod, "Theogony," in *Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns, and Homerica*, trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White, ed. Hugh G. Evelyn-White (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), pp. 86–87.

religious musings would seem at home in the thought of contemporary cosmologists and quantum physicists, unlike the fantastic *ex nihilo* creation postulated by theists.[180]

The latter point also allows for the pandeistic hypothesis to be considered more plausible, when considering physical fine-tuning. It is difficult to comprehend why and how the theistic god would create a world that needs precise physical fine-tuning at all, especially through such a chaotic and random method, without resorting to numerous ad hoc explanations. The pandeistic god could desire a world with humans, or something else, or had no specific (or less defined/fewer) desires, so that it is not surprising at all that such a chaotic process was employed. Even if the pandeistic god desired this world, being all-knowing, it could have transformed itself in just the right way. In fact, theoretical physicist Paola Zizzi seems to support such a view, arguing that at the end of cosmic inflation (occurring almost simultaneously with the Big Bang), the universe could have had a "primordial conscious experience" in which the universe "selected" one out of the many possible universes.[181] With regards to Craig's moral argument, no real evidence was appealed to. The lack of evidence for an objective morality should at least slightly preference pantheistic hypotheses, involving an indifferent god. Significantly, pandeism allows for such an indifferent god, particularly as it appears to vanish, similar to a deistic god, post-creation. Conversely, the existence of objective morality does not seem to disadvantage pandeism relative to theism; the morality may be part of the fine-tuning.

As discussed in the immediately preceding subsection, Craig's ontological argument arguably favours pantheistic god-models, and by extension, pandeism. An all-inclusive god is intuitively greater than the limited god of theism, and can be conceived, so that pantheistic conclusions are more probably true. It could also be argued that the god that no longer requires interaction with the creation is superior to the one that does, so that deistic concepts, including pandeism, are again preferable.[182] Similarly, concerning experiential arguments, the 'hidden' and possibly 'indifferent' god of pandeism better explains why so many people do not experience god, internally, yet also can explain why some do. Pandeisms, and other pantheisms, particularly polytheistic forms, also better explain why it is not only the god of theism (and specifically, Christian theism) that is internally experienced by some people. All these people may simply experience

[180]For an introduction to the scientific theories alluded to, see Katrin Becker, Melanie Becker, and John H. Schwarz, *String Theory and M-Theory: A Modern Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[181]Paola A. Zizzi, "Emergent Consciousness: From the Early Universe to Our Mind," *NeuroQuantology* 1, no. 3 (2003): 310.

[182]Pandeism may be less preferable here than alternative pantheisms (and even theism), as god no longer exists (where existence is assumed preferable to non-existence) *qua* god, while still being preferable to theism due to the non-reliance on *creatio ex nihilo* and other concerns already discussed. Even this is contentious, as god still exists, just now *qua* the universe. Since the pantheistic catch-all is preferable, and since deism easily explains god's hiddenness, perhaps a mixture of these concepts, pandeism, would be the most plausible god-concept of all. This concept can be made even more robust by adding in polytheistic elements.

the divine remnants that lie within themselves,[183] and within all things, so that the pandeistic god being apparently 'non-present' does not at all disadvantage the pandeistic hypothesis. The theistic hypothesis, on the other hand, is limited in only plausibly explaining experiences of the theistic God.[184]

Though Craig's miraculous Christological argument has not yet been analysed, the comments made about the internal experiences of god above, can also apply to the external experiences of miracles. Claims of miraculous resurrections need not be limited to the theistic God. For example, a morally indifferent god could have raised Jesus (or any other religious figure), as could a restless member of a divine pantheon. Pantheistic gods could also be responsible, and with regards to pandeism, the divine portion within Jesus (and others) could have sparked him back to human life. Or perhaps, Jesus was one of the few individuals throughout history who came to 'remember' who they really are, and indeed, mysteriously raised himself from 'death'. These ideas are highly speculative, though no more than theistic hypotheses. Consider also that pandeism better explains the miraculous claims of non-theistic believers, while theism is obviously limited in scope. In sum, all Craig's arguments and associated evidence was either neutral to the opposing views, or favoured alternatives like pandeism outright. It is surprising then, that Craig believes with great conviction that his case has argued for theism, as opposed to some alternative such as a broad pandeism. These arguments are not the only opportunities to allow for a direct comparison, however.

More can be said regarding the evidence of the 'hiddenness' of god. While this raises serious questions as to the plausibility of the theistic God, it is actually expected of a god that displays deistic tendencies. Indeed, it is plausibly necessary, if god no longer exists, as 'god'. It would be expected that only the universe would be observed. Then there is also the 'evidence' that evil exists. It is commonly accepted that the existence of evil, particularly in the form of gratuitous suffering, poses real challenges to theists.[185] No such problem faces the broad-minded pandeism, which, like all pantheisms, and unlike theism,

[183]Some will interpret such experiences according to their pre-existing beliefs, involving Allah, Shiva, and the like, while others will see 'the all-inclusive One'. Yet others may appeal to 'new' gods, such as the Flying Spaghetti Monster. The Flying Spaghetti Monster is a fictional and satirical god created by Bobby Henderson in protest over the possibility that creationism would be taught in American public schools. See James A. Beckford and N. J. Demerath, *The SAGE Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* (London: SAGE, 2007), p. 360.

[184]It can explain other experiences too, but via ad hoc and often counter-productive explanations, such as that Satan is responsible. Richard Swinburne proposed an exclusive and exhaustive classification of religious experiences. In this five-fold classification, pantheisms (including pandeism) again demonstrate greater explanatory scope in explaining more of these experiences, especially (and exclusively) the first type, whereby god is perceived in an 'ordinary' object. See Swinburne (EG), pp. 298–303. In the catch-all concept of pantheism, even a piece of toast that looks like Jesus or a simple glass of water can (rightly) be perceived as being god. To the theist's undoubted disgust, the pantheistic Daoist would even be comfortable in identifying god in faeces. Cf. Zhuangzi, "The Chuang Tzu," in *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, trans. Wing-Tsit Chan, ed. Wing-Tsit Chan (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 203.

[185]For a useful literature review of many decades' worth of philosophical discussion on the evidential problem of evil, including common defences and theodicies, see Daniel Howard-Snyder, ed. *The Evidential Argument from Evil* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996).

displays great robustness in possibly obtaining no matter what facts of the world are evident; just suppose a morally indifferent pandeistic god.[186] Pandeism is simply immune to many of the criticisms that can reasonably be levelled at theism, now, and in the future. Any relevant evidence discovered in future, will likely be 'neutral' with regards to a theism-pandeism comparison, or will properly favour pandeism. For example, if it is discovered that good does not exist, theism is disproved, while some pandeism may obtain whether good exists or not. Also, if no god-like being is ever encountered, pandeism is made relatively more probable, while the discovery of a god-like being could equally support both god-models, depending on the nature of that being.

Whether or not Craig intended to explicitly rule out theistic rivals such as polytheisms and alternative monotheisms, as Swinburne does,[187] he deferred to simplicity criteria that supposedly rendered the theistic hypothesis the most plausible explanation of all the available evidence.[188] As discussed in the numerous sub-sections on pantheistic alternatives, these simplicity criteria do not aid Craig's case for theism, and in fact point to the pantheistic concepts as the simplest – and thus by Craig's reasoning, most plausible – divine explanations of all. With regards to the first criterion, related to Ockham's Razor, Craig preferred explanations involving fewer entities, so that entities are not unnecessarily multiplied. On theism, there exist at least two entities, God and the world. In pantheistic scenarios, there is only one, god herself.[189] Even on pandeism, where god becomes the universe, there is only one entity existing at one time, and the universe is in any case equatable with god. Like all pantheisms then, pandeism allows for only one entity, as naturalism does; fewer entities than theism unnecessarily supposes. With regards to the second simplicity criterion, which assumes that an infinite or greater god is relatively simpler, pantheisms such as pandeism are not disadvantaged. They even allow for a conceivably greater god than theism, one that is infinite or maximal in all reasonable aspects, or at the very least, is constrained by fewer boundaries or limitations.

Craig also considered explanations that are less ad hoc to be preferable. Pandeism is undoubtedly less ad hoc than theism, if only for not relying on the ad hoc notion of *creatio ex nihilo* (and the related assumption of substance dualism, for which there is also a lack of evidence), and for offering more straightforward explanations of the chaotic origins of the universe and the seeming hiddenness of god (in other words, god *is* hidden/missing). Craig also prefers explanations that demonstrate greater explanatory scope. Again, pandeism defeats theism as it can explain the vastly more numerous experiential and miraculous claims of non-theistic – as well as theistic –

[186]I am not alone in recognising that the evidential argument from evil does probabilistic harm to theism but not to pandeism. See William C. Lane, "Leibniz's Best World Claim Restructured," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (2010): 76–77.

[187]Richard Swinburne, *Epistemic Justification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 83; Swinburne (EG), p. 109.

[188]Craig (RF), pp. 152, 187–188.

[189]Not to be confused for certain forms of panpsychism.

believers, and even the lack of such claims.[190] These factors are only two of seven outlined by philosopher Christopher Behan McCullagh, which he proposes to be used in weighing historical hypotheses.[191] Craig, who finds these factors useful in determining what is the best explanation of the evidence, summarises them thusly:

1. The hypothesis, together with other true statements, must imply further statements describing present, observable data.
2. The hypothesis must have greater *explanatory scope* (that is, imply a greater variety of observable data) than rival hypotheses.
3. The hypothesis must have greater *explanatory power* (that is, make the observable data more probable) than rival hypotheses.
4. The hypothesis must be *more plausible* (that is, be implied by a greater variety of accepted truths, and its negation implied by fewer accepted truths) than rival hypotheses.
5. The hypothesis must be *less ad hoc* (that is, include fewer new suppositions about the past not already implied by existing knowledge) than rival hypotheses.
6. The hypothesis must be *disconfirmed by fewer accepted beliefs* (that is, when conjoined with accepted truths, imply fewer false statements) than rival hypotheses.
7. The hypothesis must so *exceed its rivals* in fulfilling conditions (2)–(6) that there is little chance of a rival hypothesis, after further investigation, exceeding it in meeting these conditions.[192]

Both hypotheses, that the theistic God exists (h_1), and that the pandeistic god exists (h_2),[193] address (1), in going some ways to explaining present, observable data. As already explained, pandeistic hypotheses better explain the presently-known evidence (such as the seemingly chaotic origins of the observable universe), and being more robust, would likely better explain any evidence discovered in future, though this may be more relevant to the following factors. (2) greatly favours h_2, on account of its being able to explain non-theistic experiential and miraculous claims, as well as non-religious claims such as those involving psychic powers.[194]

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[190]Such as that god is simply no longer present, or that not everyone will be able to access their inherent divinity or 'remember' (at this present moment at least) that they are divine.

[191]Christopher Behan McCullagh, *Justifying Historical Descriptions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 19.

[192]Craig (RF), p. 233. Though this pertains to historical explanations (which is in any case, the sort proposed by Craig's climactic Christological argument), Craig makes use of these factors for non-historical explanations also, such as on p. 171. Furthermore, these factors seem reasonable, particularly regarding Bayesian methods, so that they shall here be unproblematically utilised in a comparison of theistic and pandeistic hypotheses.

[193]Or rather, 'did exist'. Though, in this scenario, the present universe is still god, albeit in an alternative form.

[194]Consider also the aforementioned 'problem' of a "temporal effect" arising from a "timeless cause". Pandeism offers a simpler explanation of such 'evidence' than Craig's brand of theism: the "temporal effect" and the "timeless cause" are one. Craig's solution was to appeal to a personal agent that can exercise free choice. See Craig (RF), pp. 153–154.

Likewise, (3) greatly favours h_2, if only for the fact that an indifferent pandeistic god makes the chaotic origins of the universe more likely than the God of theism, who has specific aims, and a specific universe, in mind, though h_2 can also ably explain away the problem of evil. For the already-discussed considerations, and also when considering the relative robustness of pandeism, and the potential for fewer contradictions with the actual scenario as explained by current evidence, (4) also favours pandeistic god-models.

As discussed throughout, pantheisms in general, pandeism included, offer explanations that are less ad hoc, so that (5) also leads to the relatively plausibility of pandeism over theism. It seems that (6) is an expression of the robustness of a theory. As explained above, there are numerous states of evidence that would disconfirm theism, and very few that would disconfirm pandeism, and pantheisms in general. In other words, pandeism is again preferable. Consider also, that while there is only one form of theism posited by Craig, there are an infinite number of possible pandeisms, obtaining in many different possible worlds, and associated different states of evidence, so that even if the effect of simplicity is overlooked, we are left with agnosticism or even a-theism in general as the most plausible options. Given that pandeistic hypotheses arguably exceeded the theistic explanation for all these factors, (7) is obviously fulfilled for h_2. The catch-all hypothesis of pandeism, or even one form of pandeism, clearly offers better explanations than the theistic hypothesis. Add to this comparison, the other plausible and infinitely many classical pantheisms, panentheisms, polytheisms, and alternative monotheisms, including the various deisms, and the hybrids thereof, such as a deism involving 31 slightly evil but exceedingly clever gods who laugh at us from afar for getting it all so wrong, or a pandeism involving 32 very good though very weak gods, and it becomes exceedingly clear that the probability of the truth of theism is incomprehensibly small. Like naturalism, pandeism simply dominates the probability calculation.

Finally, though this is 'merely' of pragmatic concern,[195] pantheisms such as pandeism could be expected to yield more tolerant societies,[196] and more respectful attitudes towards nature, unlike the strict, segregating, and often-apocalyptic exclusivist brands of theism.[197] Exclusivist theists naturally out-group those with opposing views, and would seemingly be more likely to be bigoted and violent.[198]

[195]Recall that Craig actually values certain pragmatic reasons very highly. See ibid., pp. 65–88.

[196]Even atheistic or naturalistic – and possibly polytheistic – worldviews would be acceptable, if a broad-minded pandeism obtains.

[197]Consider the words (supposedly) of Solomon, "God is in heaven, and you are on earth". See Ecclesiastes 5:2. Contrast this with the pantheistic teachings of Bishop John Shelby Spong, who believes that "Human life is capable of entering the infinity of God because the infinity of God can be found in the heart of every human life. The two are not distinct. Humanity and divinity flow together". See John Shelby Spong, *Why Christianity Must Change or Die: A Bishop Speaks to Believers in Exile* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), p. 131.

[198]A contemporary example would be the rise of ISIS. For a nuanced discussion on the religious and non-religious factors involved, see Simon Cottee, "'What ISIS Really Wants' Revisited: Religion Matters in *Jihadist* Violence, but How?," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, no. doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2016.1248665 (2016).

Consider also that even if the arguments in these pantheistic subsections do not comprehensively demonstrate the greater plausibility of pantheistic god-models, they still present reasonable alternatives that the theist must address and eliminate. Unfortunately for the theist, however, even the wholly unjustified assumption of bare theism, while necessary, is still not sufficient to argue for the truth of a particular ramified theism, as shall be discussed below.

3.6 The Problem of (Special) Revelation

We now arrive at a fifth major group of challenges facing Christian evidentialists. Firstly, naturalism was to be rejected in favour of supernaturalism. Secondly, with transcendence assumed, the theist needed to explain why only one god exists. Thirdly, the theist needed to demonstrate why theism is preferable to alternative monotheisms. Fourthly, the non-transcendent god-models, which better aligned with our available evidence, had to somehow be eliminated. Now, the Christian evidentialist still needs to proceed from theism to the truth of Christianity, and, generally, the exclusive truth of Christianity. Just as Craig drew a distinction between moral existence and moral awareness, so too should the existence of God not be confused for the awareness of God. Charitably assume that the god of theism has (miraculously)[199] been proven to exist.

This information alone is of little practical use. There may indeed be a necessary and incomprehensibly great creator and fine-tuner, but if they cannot be identified, believers do not know who to direct their adulation towards – if this is even required – nor which religious path is best traversed. It is wonderful to know that there is indeed a standard of objective morality to live by, except if this is accompanied by total ignorance as to what that standard is. Knowing that God exists through general revelation is fine, but the claims to God's special revelation are more relevant. Hence, Craig is not satisfied in merely demonstrating the truth of bare theism, but in convincing his audience that his ramified theism, Christian theism, contains the one true path. This is well-expressed by the introduction to his chapter on miracles, in *Reasonable Faith*:

> Before we can examine the evidence to see whether the Creator God of the universe has revealed himself in some special way in the world in order to offer us the promise of immortality so necessary for meaningful existence now, we must deal with the problem of whether such divine action is possible in the first place.[200]

[199] Given that there are more plausible options, and that they are infinite in number, nothing short of a miracle could prove theism true. Appropriately, that does seem to be the point of Craig's climactic Christological argument, which is analysed in Part 4.

[200] Craig (RF), p. 247.

Craig's strategy is, reasonably, to demonstrate that God has revealed herself to humankind, at a certain time, at a certain place, by a certain name, and has given people a specific set of guidelines by which to live. This moves the discussion from merely fascinating philosophical matters, to issues of very high pragmatic importance. With constant references to 'God' in Craig's work, and nary a reference to 'Yahweh', the traditional god of most Christians, it may not always be clear just which god Craig believes in. This doubt is dispelled by his answer to the question I posed to him at the concluding event of his 2013 Australian tour. After being asked if the God he believes in and who raised Jesus from death is Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament, he simply replied, "Yes".[201] There are many different claims about how – and to whom – the God of theism has revealed itself, resulting in many different faiths and religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Mormonism, and their many offshoots.[202] This religious diversity demonstrates that proving the truth of theism is merely the first step in proving the truth of any specific religious tradition.[203] The manner in which God is claimed to have revealed herself to humankind is often described as 'miraculous', and it is indeed a miraculous claim that Craig resorts to in his climatic argument. Before examining that claim however, and before establishing if miraculous explanations are even plausible, it is pertinent to consider the many challenges that pertain to claims of God's being a revealer.

Problems abound with the assumption that God has indeed *revealed* himself to *humankind*, or even, that God *intends* or intended to reveal herself to her creations at all. If not, then a person's choice of religion would be objectively nugatory. With regards to *humans* being graced with God's introduction, it is important to revisit

[201] William Lane Craig, "Your God is Alive!," (Sydney: University of Sydney, 2013). This brief answer was followed by some laughter, perhaps because the exchange was seen as fatuous, or because a response was expected of me, but did not eventuate, with Craig finally answering an unasked follow-up question, saying that he sees no problem in reconciling the 'harsh god' of the Old Testament, with the 'loving god' of the New Testament. He also added that this is the god that Jesus believed in. There is clearly no ambiguity here.

[202] There is actually some question about whether Mormons might be polytheists, or even atheists. See A. A. Howsepian, "Are Mormons Theists?," *Religious Studies* 32, no. 3 (1996): 357–370.

[203] Craig does dedicate a chapter of *On Guard* to the topic of religious diversity and religious pluralism, but it does not contain any arguments to the effect that the (supposed) god of the philosophical arguments must be the theistic (and Christian) God. Rather, the chapter serves to unconvincingly fend off common objections, once his Christian theistic exclusivism is assumed, and perhaps to express some regret that his doctoral supervisor and former mentor – John Hick – eventually adopted religious pluralism. Note that he nowhere explains why it is good for God to create and then to 'save' a person, nor why being saved is such a great good that it becomes acceptable for many to be 'lost'. He also seems to overlook the issue that if God knew certain people would be unsaved, even if exposed to the Gospel message, it may have been best to leave them uncreated. According to Craig – at least he mentions the possibility, which he relies on – God had geographically separated such people from those more willing to accept God's truth, which means that God could have moved them to another planet, or simply chosen not to create them. This would 'save' those who were predetermined to be damned from eternal torment, avoid uncomfortable questions as to why God would *design* such imperfect and unsalvageable souls in the first place, and remove potential barriers to Christian belief. This concept may also indicate inherent racist attitudes; the sort that inspires and justifies White Man's Burden and Manifest Destiny. See Craig (OG), pp. 265–286.

themes raised in the critique of Craig's teleological argument. Craig must explain why it is that humans are supposedly of such great objective importance, that they deserve these divine communications. Such theistic evidentialists ought to entertain the notion that the focus of God's attention may not, in fact, be *Homo sapiens*. This line of thought raises the possibility that many humans cannot bear the thought that they are some insignificant side-effect of other processes, so they invent religions in order to place themselves as the reason for everything and as the object of a loving God's unyielding love and attention. Momentarily assuming that God is interested in revealing itself, which is arguably part of the definition of 'God', it cannot simply be assumed that it is not some other species that shall receive her.

Perhaps the true God has actually revealed himself, not to humans,[204] but to an extra-terrestrial species,[205] or the stars in the heavens.[206] Or more locally, (s)he might have been revealed to oysters, bees, peacocks, artificially-intelligent robots, inanimate rocks, or molecules of ozone. For example, the true religious faith might lie with, say, the boobies, or the sheep, whose God will deliver them from the humans who eat them. Elements of this tradition could have become appropriated by both Jews (cf. their alleged Egyptian captivity) and Christians (cf. Jesus as shepherd

[204]In alignment with much of my project, philosopher Tim Mulgan believes that there does exist some sort of god, but utilises the common atheistic arguments against what is commonly perceived as theism. He thinks that humans are not of any great import to this entity, and makes a salient point about unjustified anthropocentrism often underlying the arguments for theism and perhaps the arguments for naturalism. In other words, theists conclude that humans are of prime importance, because it was God's intention, while naturalists find that the evidence indicates our insignificance and so conclude that supernaturalism is false. See Tim Mulgan, *Purpose in the Universe: The Moral and Metaphysical Case for Ananthropocentric Purposivism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[205]Theists may, irrelevantly, cite the Fermi paradox regarding the lack of evidence for alien civilisations. Noted Creationist Ken Ham suspects that there are no intelligent extra-terrestrials and surprisingly asserts that if there were, "any aliens would also be affected by Adam's sin, but because they are not Adam's descendants, they can't have salvation". See Ken Ham. "'We'll Find a New Earth within 20 Years'," accessed 29/07/2014, http://blogs.answersingenesis.org/blogs/ken-ham/2014/07/20/well-find-a-new-earth-within-20-years. One novel solution holds that much of the observable universe is a simulation designed to make it appear as though humans are the only intelligent beings. See Stephen Baxter, "The Planetarium Hypothesis: A Resolution of the Fermi Paradox," *Journal of the British Interplanetary Society* 54, no. 5/6 (2001): 210–216. Bostrom has even argued that it is likely that we are in a simulation. See Nick Bostrom, "Are You Living in a Computer Simulation?," *Philosophical Quarterly* 53, no. 211 (2003): 243–255. In that case, the universe as we know it really was designed. However, the 'real world' may be one in which it is very probable for people to exist without God. Finally, perhaps, as Aldous Huxley ruminated, we are living inside another planet's hell!

[206]Cf. Revelation 12:4.

motifs).[207] Mayhap God has even chosen to reveal god's self to other great apes, such as orangutans or gorillas. It is also possible that the species chosen to be graced with God's all-important reveal is not *Homo sapiens sapiens* (modern humans), but our closest relatives, *Pan paniscus* (bonobos) and *Pan troglodytes* (common chimpanzees).[208]

Consider also, the post-humanist possibilities that God has not yet revealed itself to humanity, or any other species, but will do so in future. It may be tomorrow, or 100 years from now. It may be to *Homo sapiens sapiens*, or a slightly-evolved future human species (perhaps a *Homo evolvus*, *Homo noeticus*, or *Homo sapiens luminous*), or a much-changed human species (such as the Eloi or Morlocks),[209] or an alternative species, possibly long after humans are extinct, such as the aforementioned 'enduring cockroaches' or a highly-evolved race of cat-people.[210] Our collective ego, whilst visibly important to the survival of the species, cannot be considered authoritative in matters of objective truth, especially when the matter concerns human importance, where – presently unavailable – outsider perspectives may be required.

It is worth noting that this seemingly egotistical feeling of self-importance is quite *natural*. Natural selection expectedly selects against those entities that see no point to their existence. Nevertheless, there appears to be no good reason to hubristically assume anthropocentrism as some undeniable fact, and a move to more biocentric views would surely allow for more objective philosophising. Indeed, given our many limitations and fleeting existence in a minute part of the universe, arguing for human primacy would be quite the challenge, so that it is more reasonable to adopt the heuristic mediocrity

[207] See Exodus, Psalms 23, 1 Peter 5:4. Note that the archaeological evidence contradicts Jewish claims of Israelite servitude in ancient Egypt. For one, an exodus of such a great many people (depending on interpretation, Exodus 1:9 indicates that there were more Israelites than Egyptians in Egypt), particularly the bulk of the work force, should have left evidence of widespread economic and social upheaval. See James Weinstein, "Exodus and the Archaeological Reality," in *Exodus: The Egyptian Evidence*, ed. Ernest S. Frerichs and Leonard H. Lesko (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), p. 87; Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of its Sacred Texts* (New York: Free Press, 2002), pp. 62–69. Even respected Jewish rabbis such as David Wolpe doubt the historicity of the Exodus, and other aspects of the traditional Jewish origin tales. See Teresa Watanabe. "Doubting the Story of Exodus," accessed 06/07/2015, http://articles.latimes.com/2001/apr/13/news/mn-50481.

[208] These two types of chimpanzees are the closest living relatives to humans. See Anne Fischer et al., "Evidence for a Complex Demographic History of Chimpanzees," *Molecular Biology and Evolution* 21, no. 5 (2004): 799–808. Also, Frans de Waal has done much interesting work with 'intelligent' animals such as chimpanzees. For example, see Frans de Waal, *Are We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are?* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2016).

[209] H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (London: Penguin, 2012).

[210] *Felis sapiens* plays a prominent role in the surrealist humour of Rob Grant and Doug Naylor. Like humans, these cat people thought themselves very important, created religions, fought holy wars, and obeyed unreasonably sexually restrictive commandments such as "Thou shalt not partake of carnal knowledge with more than four members of the opposite sex at any one session". See Grant Naylor, *Red Dwarf: Infinity Welcomes Careful Drivers* (London: Penguin Books, 1989), pp. 123–128.

principle.[211] And that God would wait several more years should also not deter the theistic philosopher, given that many are content to believe that God had already waited billions (from the creation of the Universe, and the formation of Earth), millions (since the dawn of humankind), hundreds of thousands (since the rise of anatomically modern humans), or thousands (since the rise of human civilisation) of years, before finally revealing herself to only a handful of people in the sparsely-populated deserts of the Middle East.[212]

Similarly, it is possible that God has already revealed himself, though much earlier than is traditionally thought. God may have been revealed not to modern humans, but to human ancestors such as *Homo heidelbergensis*, *Homo erectus*, *Homo habilis*, *Australopithecus afarensis*, *Pierolapithecus catalaunicus*, or perhaps to the closely-related *Homo floresiensis* or *Homo neanderthalensis*.[213] Or maybe the revelation is not for the advanced apes at all, whose origins, like all animals, lie in primordial sludge. This grand revelation may have been reserved for less-related species such as the many kinds of dinosaurs, or even earlier – and common – ancestors, such as primitive, single-celled, prokaryote-like organisms. These seemingly misanthropic imaginings are all possibilities that Craig has not even acknowledged, let alone eliminated. Additionally, all this hypothesising assumed that the supposedly existing god actually has or would reveal itself. Perhaps s/he has not, and never will.

This god may simply not wish to reveal god's self (like a deistic god), or may not be able to (like a pandeistic god).[214] This god might not want to take any action, or to take only non-revelatory action. It cannot be assumed that the being 'proven' by Craig's philosophical arguments is a revelatory one, and indeed, this is often seen as an accidental property of the theistic God, rather than an essential property such as omnipotence.[215] Craig's case for the existence of the theistic God failed miserably, leaving little hope for his case for Christian theism. Suppose, however, that the revelatory God exists, so that we can differentiate from deism, and has indeed revealed himself to humankind, so that we can differentiate from the aforementioned 'quasi-deisms' and properly end up with Craig's theism, and that she has done this relatively recently, such as within a timeframe of

[211]Consider also that humans are not the oldest extant species on Earth, or the most numerous. There are also possibly many more older and life-sustaining planets throughout the universe.

[212]This references the God of Judeo-Christianity. See the biblical books of Genesis and Mark. Philosophers might wonder why God did not reveal himself to the far more numerous Chinese. This alludes to the related issue that the religiosity of many derives from cultural contingencies. For example, it was merely due to epistemic luck that the humble fisherman was living in Palestine during Jesus' lifetime, and was thus able to adopt the one true faith, unlike the hapless native of South America.

[213]It is believed that humans and Neanderthals interbred, with many humans today containing Neanderthal nuclear DNA. See Paul H. Mason and Roger V. Short, "Neanderthal-human Hybrids," *Hypothesis* 9, no. 1 (2011): 1–5.

[214]It is not inconceivable that polytheistic gods would also not interfere, such as if they took a vote and decided to grant free reign to their creations, as with the Prime Directive of *Star Trek* or the Watchers' commitment to non-interference in the *Marvel Universe*.

[215]Cf. T. J. Mawson, *Belief in God: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 10.

1000–10,000 years ago.[216] This raises the issue as to why God's revelation *to humankind*, would be to only a very limited number of people, and how this relates to the plausibility of such a god, especially in light of God's love and apparent desire that all enter into a relationship with him. Overlooking this important matter, the many supposedly revealed ('specific') gods that have been claimed as being the actual ('generic') God include the likes of Ahura Mazda, Dea, Aten, Mukuru, Bahá, Waheguru, Chukwu, the Flying Spaghetti Monster, Dyeus, Tenri-Ō-no-Mikoto, Perun, Tengri, Shakti, Đ□c Cao Đài, Olorun, the 'Jewish Yahweh', the Islamic Allah, the 'Christian Yahweh', and many others.

The religiously sophisticated may raise several objections with this list of gods, which are ultimately irrelevant. Firstly, the 'Jewish Yahweh', the 'Christian Yahweh', and the Islamic Allah are often taken to be the same god.[217] Similarly, all these gods may be manifestations of Bahá. That is actually the reason for this section, making such an objection futile. All these revealed gods supposedly point to the actual existing God of theism; the task is now to determine which of these traditions is accurate, and most worthy of our respect, and finances. Secondly, many of these gods, such as Aten, seem to be (at least, originally) part of polytheistic, or even pantheistic pantheons.[218] That too is an unhelpful objection, as critical study of the history of religion demonstrates that monotheisms naturally originate from polytheisms (themselves likely originating from pantheisms and animisms), commonly via henotheism and/or monolatrism.[219] Yahweh is not exempt from this

[216] A time period that conveniently includes the emergence of writing, and precludes the emergence of cameras and the Internet. It is also a time period that purposely advantages the Abrahamic theisms.

[217] See Jacob Neusner et al., *Do Jews, Christians, and Muslims Worship the Same God?* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2012), pp. 1, 27, 56, 86. Also consider the position of mainstream Christians in accepting some extra revelations, as well as the belief in the trinity, in differentiating from Judaism, but rejecting others, and so avoiding Islam. Surely the strict monotheistic God of most Muslims is different to the triune God of most Christians.

[218] Note that the Trinitarian view of God may indicate some remnant of polytheism. Cf. Michael C. Rea, "Polytheism and Christian Belief," *Journal of Theological Studies* 57, no. 1 (2006): 138–141. The concept of the triune god of Christianity may also prove problematic for Craig, who upholds it, since it is not entailed by the arguments thus far presented or by theism, and is not accepted by all Christians, let alone all theists.

[219] Philipse (GAS), pp. 61–62; Kurt Noll, *Canaan and Israel in Antiquity: An Introduction* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), pp. 129–134, 249; Michael C. Rea, "Polytheism and Christian Belief," *Journal of Theological Studies* 57, no. 1 (2006): 136–142. See also Ara Norenzayan, *Big Gods: How Religion Transformed Cooperation and Conflict* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013). For an extensive discussion on the rise of Atenism, perhaps the world's first monotheistic religion, at least in the way that early Judaism could be described as monotheistic, see Erik Hornung, *Akhenaten and the Religion of Light*, trans. David Lorton (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001). For a thorough treatment of the natural origins of religion, see Robert N. Bellah, *Religion in Human Evolution: From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011). Note also that many believers would accept naturalistic hypotheses about religions' origins, in order to explain the rise of the many 'false religions'. This obviously raises the question, "Is this also the case with my religion?"

divine evolution, as many specialist scholars now recognise.[220] It is also possible that the extant stories of the various pantheons are embellishments to the truth of the one, true God, so that the likes of Ganesha, Zeus, Quetzalcoatl, and Odin could be uncontroversially added to this list.

Thirdly, the Flying Spaghetti Monster is known to be a fictional character. That does not preclude the possibility that people believe in her, however, or that this is indeed how God chose (or will choose) to present himself. It is also a function of the Flying Spaghetti Monster's inclusion that attention be drawn to 'specific gods' that most are unaware of (such as those of very small or obscure religions, or even of one or two reclusive people), and even 'specific gods' that have not yet been encountered or conceived. Conversely, it is also possible that God has been revealed to more than one group of people, in different ways, so that several, or perhaps all, of the world's religions are at least partially correct. While such religious pluralism justifies Craig's belief in 'the Christian God', it removes all rationale for his religious exclusivism.[221] Craig seems oblivious to this possibility, supposing with no good reason that if the Christian miracles are deemed genuine, the miracle claims of other faiths can be immediately dismissed.[222] It also seems to be an arbitrary choice, as to how many revelatory claims are accepted, such as how orthodox Christians accept more revelations than Jews, though fewer than Muslims and Mormons.

Fourthly, this list includes male and female gods, popular gods, gods whose adherents are becoming more numerous, gods whose religions are in decline, and so forth. None of these factors would necessarily affect how God chose to manifest on Earth, particularly when God is said to work in mysterious ways. Whether a faith tradition is exceedingly popular or not should not indicate its truth-value. To illustrate this point, if the *ummah* killed all the Christians tomorrow, so that Islam would replace Christianity as the world's dominant faith, it would have no decisive bearing on whether one, the other, or another altogether, was the singular true faith of God's revelation.[223] It should also be obvious that even the world's largest religions initially made do with but a handful of followers.

The intent of the previous paragraphs is to highlight the problem of inconsistent revelation. Especially in the case of religious exclusivists such as Craig, that there are

[220]Biblical scholar Mark S. Smith has discussed Yahweh's elevation from a lesser divinity to the highest divinity, at length. See Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 5–6, 143–144. With so many gods acknowledged, yet Yahweh eventually seen as the one true God, it does seem that Yahwism was – at least originally – a monolatrism rather than a strict monotheism. For a discussion on the monolatry of the Bible and the biblical remnants of a tradition that has Yahweh invading Israel from the South, in order to eventually replace El or El Shaddai, see Noll (CIA), pp. 249, 122–124.

[221]Craig's Christian particularism is proudly self-proclaimed. See Craig (OG), p. 283.

[222]Craig (RF), pp. 277–278.

[223]There certainly could be a probabilistic argument of the 'might makes right' sort. It seems relatively less plausible that an all-powerful god would watch on as all her followers are eliminated, and belief in her ceased. This arguably is of no help to Christianity, with Islam quite likely to overtake it in terms of numbers of adherents.

so many diverse claims to God's revelation poses a clear dilemma.[224] In fact, there are infinitely many alternatives to Judeo-Christian revelation, just as there are infinitely many god-concepts to compare. Either the evidentialist and exclusivist theist examine and eliminate all of the alternative 'specific gods' as false,[225] or she comprehensively and conclusively demonstrates the undeniable and exclusive truth of her own 'specific god'. As Craig has not done the former in his publicly available work (even where the analysis is restricted to 'actual' claims of revealed gods, rather than the infinitely many 'actual and possible' claims), though he espoused such an approach at a recent public debate,[226] he must do the latter.

Craig does not have access to direct empirical proof for the truth of his chosen revealed religion, undoubtedly the preferred and easiest method of identifying the God that wants to be identified, and so resorted to indirect evidence and philosophical argumentation. This approach has so far, through our generous concessions, only led Craig to the generic God of bare theism, so that Craig's burden would have to rest entirely on historical claims; indeed, that is his how he attempts to finalise his case for Christian theism. Whether a historical claim centred on a miraculous explanation is capable of carrying Craig's case is discussed in the next part of this book, after a brief note on another possible and charitable concession that can be made.

3.6.1 The Problem of Alternative Judeo-Christian Gods

As indicated above, while theists of all persuasions can happily agree over the cosmological argument, the fine-tuning argument and so forth, the apple of discord appears in the form of God's all-important reveal, and it is exceedingly difficult to justifiably narrow the possibilities to one religious stream.[227] But even if the philosopher inexplicably accepted that the presumably existing God of theism is exclusively revealed via the Judeo-Christian tradition, it – perhaps surprisingly – does not follow that God was revealed as Yahweh. In the Tanakh or Old Testament,

[224]Craig's exclusivism is again made very obvious in the chapter "Is Jesus the Only Way to God?", in his *On Guard*. See Craig (OG), pp. 265–286.

[225]This task may be even more onerous than doing the same for the 'generic gods' of alternative god-conceptions.

[226]See William Lane Craig and Peter Slezak, "Your God Raised Jesus from Death?," (Sydney: University of Technology, Sydney, 2013).

[227]This is demonstrated by Craig's mixed feelings regarding the fact that many Muslims appreciate 'his' *kalām* cosmological argument, and his belief that it is very important "that Christians be trained to share these arguments, lest they be co-opted by Muslims". Apart from the irony that Craig believes that the *kalām* cosmological argument is a Muslim argument, this might indicate Craig's preference for evangelistic efforts over purely scholarly pursuits. See Craig (RF), p. 193.

a number of gods are mentioned as being honoured by the ancient Israelites, including Chemosh, Peor, Asherah, Baal, a golden calf, and it is further indicated that some Israelites worshipped Moloch, to the extent that they would sacrifice their children to him.[228] Note that the golden calf is likely representative of El or Baal, as the bull was a symbol of El and also of his son, Hadad, often referred to as Baal (meaning 'lord').[229]

Certain biblical passages indicate that Yahweh is but one of many gods, may not be 'native' to the people of Israel,[230] and is not necessarily the 'high god', but the son of 'El', particularly if the antiquity and reliability of manuscripts like those of the Septuagint or Dead Sea Scrolls are upheld.[231] Note that even Christian scholars are prepared to acknowledge this, as evidenced by the likes of Margaret Barker and

[228] 1 Kings 11:7, Numbers 25:3, 1 Kings 14:23, 1 Kings 18, Exodus 32, Leviticus 20:2. Note that Exodus 15:11 clearly exalts Yahweh 'among the gods'.

[229] Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter Willem van der Horst, eds., *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 180–181, 275, 379–382.

[230] The popular Kenite hypothesis has the ancient Israelites appropriating Yahweh from the Midianites and perhaps also the Edomites. This may be why the Midianites are given a crucial role in the Torah, with Moses – who would promote Yahweh worship, and oppose Baal worship – marrying the daughter of a Kenite/Midianite priest, who happened to honour Yahweh. For an interesting discussion of the hypothesis, see Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The Midianite-Kenite Hypothesis Revisited and the Origins of Judah," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 33, no. 2 (2008): 131–153. The Edomites were supposedly the descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob/Israel and according to Deuteronomy 23:7, were not to be despised. It is worth noting that while many gods/religions are denigrated in the Tanakh, the same cannot be said for the nearby Edomites and their god, Qos; perhaps because Qos and Yahweh were at one stage the same god. 1 Chronicles 15:17 mentions the name "Kushaiah", which could mean "Qos is Yahweh". See Justin Kelley, "Toward a New Synthesis of the God of Edom and Yahweh," *Antiguo Oriente* 7, no. 1 (2009): 255–280.

[231] Exodus 12:12, Numbers 21:29, 33:4, Deuteronomy 10:17, 11:16, 32:43, Joshua 24:2, Judges 11:24, Psalms 89:7, 95:3, 97:7, Daniel 11:39; Deuteronomy 32:8–9, Psalms 82. For more on Yahweh and the high god 'El', and their appearances in the Masoretic Text, the Septuagint, and the Dead Sea Scrolls, see Smith (OBM), pp. 142–145. Consider also the evolution – within the biblical texts – of the increasingly transcendent (and less-anthropomorphic) Yahweh from merely the – or a – god of the Israelites, to (perhaps as a defiant reaction to Israelite defeats) a universal god of 'the whole earth', who probably directed other nations to punish Israel; the Israelites could have simply – like other peoples – adopted an alternative, and evidently 'more powerful' god, such as that of their conquerors. See Karen Armstrong, *A History of God* (London: Random House, 1999), pp. 24, 52–97. Armstrong is not alone in noting the development and exaltation of Yahweh from a limited Canaanite deity, due in part to external imperialistic pressures. For example, see Shawn W. Flynn, *YHWH Is King: The Development of Divine Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 2013). Yahweh also becomes more 'transcendent' over time, a far cry from his very anthropomorphic portrayals in Genesis 3 and 18. Note also that the Septuagint, though a Greek translation, is far older than the standard Hebrew Masoretic text (which forms the basis for most Old Testament translations today), so could indicate older and more authoritative Hebrew traditions. Interestingly, also note that such Jewish defiance, which some may alternatively call stubbornness or resilience, may have contributed to the development of Christianity as well, as with the mainstream view that disillusionment over Jesus' death led to the adoption of the belief in a suffering/dying and rising Messiah. The same could apply to alternative views of Christian Origins as well, since almost all such theories involve the Jews finding a spiritual solution to a physical problem.

Thom Stark.[232] One passage also indicates that Yahweh was bested by the god of the Moabites, Chemosh, which further fuels the pessimism about associating the Judeo-Christian god with the ontological argument's maximally great being.[233] Eventually, Yahweh seems to have overcome his great rival Baal Hadad, and replaced his father El, largely through assimilation. Indeed, various traditions and theories conflate the identities of El, Baal, and Yahweh, due to their many similarities, such as Baal and Yahweh being likened to storm-gods, which may explain their ongoing rivalry in the Tanakh, and all three figures being romantically associated with Asherah.[234] Much of this directly coheres with Levantine – and specifically Canaanite – polytheism, particularly when considering theories that the Israelites were not a separate people altogether as the Torah asserts via the ethnographic Table of Nations,[235] but formed part of the Canaanite nation.[236]

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[232]Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992); Valerie Tarico and Thom Stark. "Polytheism and Human Sacrifice in Early Israelite Religion," accessed 23/12/2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/valerie-tarico/polytheism-and-human-sacr_b_777340.html. The latter reference also has Stark explaining that human sacrifice "was an acceptable part of [early] Israelite and Judean religion". Any conservative Christian believer scoffing at this notion need only consider Jesus' role in their faith. See also this webpage, whose publisher, the Quartz Hill School of Theology, is associated with the Quartz Hill Community Church: QHST. "Ugarit and the Bible," accessed 12/01/2017, http://www.theology.edu/ugarbib.htm.

[233]See 2 Kings 3. A human sacrifice proved to be the decisive factor.

[234]Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter Willem van der Horst, eds., *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 99–105, 915–916. For more on these gods, see John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002). Note that a preferred god may become continually greater over time on account of religious rivalries, akin to 'my daddy is stronger' schoolyard taunts, until an infinite or maximally great god is arrived at. Also, there has been some discussion on Yahweh's association with the Sun. See J. Glen Taylor, "A Response To Steve A. Wiggins, 'Yahweh: the God of Sun?'," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 21, no. 71 (1996): 107–119; J. Glen Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun: Biblical and Archaeological Evidence for Sun Worship in Ancient Israel* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993); Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2002), pp. 148–159.

[235]Genesis 10–11.

[236]Mark S. Smith argued that the Israelites derived much of their culture and religion from the Canaanites. See Smith (EHG). According to several Israeli archaeologists and historians, the ancient Israelites were Canaanites. See Finkelstein and Silberman (BU), p. 118; Anita Shapira, "The Bible and Israeli Identity," *AJS Review* 28, no. 1 (2004): 40–41. Archaeologist William G. Dever finds that there is "overwhelming archaeological evidence today of largely indigenous origins for early Israel". See William G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It?: What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), p. 99. See also Jonathan N. Tubb, *Canaanites* (London: British Museum Press, 1998), pp. 13–16, who says that "Ammonites, Moabites, Israelites and Phoenicians undoubtedly achieved their own cultural identities, and yet ethnically they were all Canaanites", and that "Israel was, in reality, a sub-set of Canaanite culture". Ann Killebrew is yet another who doubts the biblical accounts, finding it reasonable to believe that "early Israel consisted largely of indigenous Canaanites". See Ann E. Killebrew, *Biblical Peoples And Ethnicity: An Archaeological Study of Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, And Early Israel 1300–1100 B.C.E.* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), p. 96. See also Thomas L. Thompson, *The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel*

There are also some similarities between the oft-discussed conflict between Yahweh and Leviathan in the Bible,[237] and the Baal-Yam battle of Canaanite mythology, as well as the Babylonian *Chaoskampf* myth wherein Tiamat is slain by Marduk.[238] This appropriation of and shifting stature of gods in various cultures was quite common in the Ancient Near East and the Mediterranean, with many important gods being identified as or confused for similar stature gods of other pantheons, or the children of those gods. For example, the Semitic El has been identified with the Greek Kronos (and also the Roman Saturn), the father of Zeus.[239] Sky god Zeus is unproblematically identified with Yahweh (and also the Roman god, Jupiter),[240] yet he is fathered by Kronos, who was likewise sired by Uranus (sky) and born of Gaia (earth),[241] who – in certain traditions – can be interpreted as having emerged from the Chaos, which seems to be something of an all-encompassing and primordial pantheistic – or pandeistic – god.[242]

According to the Phoenician author Sanchuniathon's euhemeristic account, El/Kronos descended from Uranus and Gaia, who in turn were beget by Elyon ('the Most High') and Beruth, who may be or ultimately derive from the pantheistic

(New York: Basic Books, 1999), p. 234; Niels Peter Lemche, *The Canaanites and Their Land: The Tradition of the Canaanites* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), p. 152. For the cynically inclined, it would certainly seem rather convenient that the 'promised land' happened to be the land these people – or their close brethren – already occupied. For a somewhat similar discussion of the identity of contemporary Jews or Israelis, see Shlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People* (London: Verso, 2010). It is obviously controversial to argue that certain contemporary Muslim Palestinians are 'true ethnic Jews' whilst majority Israelis are more related to ancient Yemenites and Khazars. Nevertheless, there is some scientific support for the questioning of the Ashkenazi Jewish racial identity, which may explain why many contemporary Jews seemingly have more in common with Turkic and Eastern European peoples, than with other people of the Middle Eastern region. See Marta D. Costa et al., "A substantial prehistoric European ancestry amongst Ashkenazi maternal lineages," *Nature Communications* 4, no. 2543 (2013): doi:https://doi.org/10.1038/ncomms3543.

[237]Such as Yahweh's comprehensive victory in Psalms 74:14.

[238]Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine: A Western Religious History* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2006), p. 78.

[239]Joseph Fontenrose, "Dagon and El," *Oriens* 10, no. 2 (1957): 277–279; Benjamin Urrutia, "About El, Asherah, Yahweh and Anath," *American Anthropologist* 75, no. 4 (1973); Mark S. Smith, "The Near Eastern Background of Solar Language for Yahweh," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 109, no. 1 (1990): 38. Eusebius has Sanchuniathon (via Philo of Byblos) equating El with Kronos and Saturn. See Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, trans. Edwin Hamilton Gifford, vol. 1 (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), pp. 41–45.

[240]John Pairman Brown, "Yahweh, Zeus, Jupiter: The High God and the Elements," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 106, no. 2 (2009): 175–197.

[241]Uranus was also the son of Gaia.

[242]See Hesiod, "Theogony," in *Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns, and Homerica*, ed. Evelyn-White (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), pp. 86–89. Note that it is here not vitally important whether Hesiod intended to portray Gaia as emerging *from* or *alongside* Chaos. What is important is that the gods associated with Yahweh are far removed from the top of their respective divine hierarchies.

Chaos that Sanchuniathon also mentions.[243] The realisation of Yahweh's originally humble station, especially when including the lofty position of the higher and all-inclusive pantheistic god, could be very humbling for his followers.[244] Yahweh is clearly not the god a neutral scholar would identify as the one true God of the philosophers. Knowing the history and evolution of Yahweh and associated gods, the more obvious choice would be the pantheistic Chaos, or perhaps Gaia or even El, who is highly esteemed by the very biblical traditions that eventually exalt Yahweh. Of course, if the associating of Yahweh and El to the gods of alternative religious traditions is simply due to them being alike rather than being actual linguistic or cultural cognates, such reasoning has little merit.

However, these theories concerning Yahweh are firmly entrenched in Old Testament scholarship. For example, that Yahweh later supplanted El (with the name unceremoniously but not unexpectedly adopted as a generic term for God; such relegation is common in religious appropriation) is recognised by many scholars as partly being made evident by the Priestly retroactive revision in Exodus 6:2–3 which has Yahweh explaining to Moses that he was known to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as 'El Shaddai', and did not bother to tell them that his name is actually 'Yahweh'.[245] Craig is only mildly aware of all these polytheistic implications, admitting that they are "in an area outside my specialization".[246] Given the great burden his historical and post-philosophical argument must bear, and his (and Jesus') specified belief in Yahweh, it would be appropriate for Craig to immerse – or at least properly familiarise – himself in the history of the ancient Israelite/Palestinian religions. Nevertheless, when questioned on the differing identities of El and Yahweh, he deferred to Richard S. Hess (Denver Seminary), who, conveniently, is – going against the growing Old Testament minimalism – something of a maximalist.[247]

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[243]These writings are preserved only in Chapter X, Book I of Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica*. See Eusebius (PG1), pp. 37–41. On p. 43, El/Kronos is said to have emasculated the rapacious Uranus. Cf. Hesiod, "Theogony," in *Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns, and Homerica*, ed. Evelyn-White (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), pp. 90–93. On Elyon and Beruth deriving from some Chaos-like entity, the relevant portion confusingly begins with a mythological cosmogony, and then ends with a euhemeristic account. This might further remove El/Kronos from the initial all-being, but as with the previous footnote, is of little import.

[244]Many more links have been found between the gods of the Greek and Middle Eastern peoples. For a discussion on the similarities between Gaia/Uranus/Kronos/Zeus and Tiamat/Apsu/Ea/Marduk, see Richard S. Caldwell, *The Origin of the Gods: A Psychoanalytic Study of Greek Theogonic Myth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 78–81.

[245]For more on this topic, see Ruether (GDF), p. 77; Day (YGGC), pp. 13–34; Thomas L. Thompson, "How Yahweh Became God: Exodus 3 and 6 and the Heart of the Pentateuch," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 20, no. 68 (1995): 57–74. Thompson leaves open the possibility that the Yahweh of Genesis 6 actually replaces several of ancient Palestine's ancestral gods. Another useful resource that presents multiple views and discusses many of these Yahwistic topics is Diana Vikander Edelman, ed. *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms* (Kampen, The Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1995).

[246]William Lane Craig and Richard Hess. "Jewish Beliefs about God: Ancient Israelite Polytheism?," accessed 21/02/2014, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/jewish-beliefs-about-god.

[247]Ibid. Note that Hess was unable to conclusively rule out that El is a separate deity, and admitted that there were indeed polytheists amongst the Israelites, who believed in Yahweh as one of many

Craig could object that these other gods have largely been forgotten, and that it is the belief in – and documents about – Yahweh that have endured, and that an offshoot of early Yahwism grew to become the world's largest and most dominant faith. A simple counter is that history tends to be written by the victors. (Regarding the extra revelations that led to the Christian faith, it might also be a challenge to Craig to explain God's seeming inactivity between the times of the Old and New Testaments.) Perhaps, however, such dominance is indeed indicative of which is the true expression of God. This is a problematic view, as, just as with simplicity, popularity is not necessarily truth-conducive. And, just as Judaism and Christianity had been comparatively insignificant faiths once, so too may Judeo-Christianity become a minor faith in future. As indicated earlier, if Islam overtakes Christianity as the world's largest faith, it would be inconsistent to suddenly declare that the Islamic Allah is the true expression of God, after many years of announcing the Judeo-Christian Yahweh's primacy.

The problem remains, even when the scope of possible gods is narrowed again, to include only those of the Christian stream of religions. The Satan or Lucifer character that appears in the New Testament could be a rival god (or even the only and true God); one that perhaps has been inappropriately slandered.[248] Certain early and Gnostic forms of Christianity also equated the Old Testament god, Yahweh, with the typically sub-maximal Demiurge (who variously could be God, Satan, Ialdabaoth, or another being altogether), asserting that Jesus was or was representative of the 'true' or higher God.[249] A particularly interesting – and telling – parallel is

gods. His primary defensive tactic is to point out that El (like Baal) does not necessarily *have* to refer to the name of a god, but *could* also refer to a title, which is rather unsophisticated and ignores the history of the terms. Additionally, the many similarities between Yahweh and similar Mediterranean and Levantine gods were left unaddressed. Finally, he offered no argument as to why the Septuagint's version of Deuteronomy 32:8–9 should be taken as less authoritative than what is found in the much later Masoretic text.

[248]There have indeed been dualistic believers who thought Lucifer benevolent and who were harshly treated. For example, see P. Czarnecki, "Luciferianism in the thirteenth Century – A Forgotten Off-shoot of Catharism," *Studia Historyczne* 47, no. 1 (2004): 3–19. Also consider the plight of the Kurdish Yazidis, who are still heavily persecuted by dogmatic and exclusivist theists.

[249]A popular view among certain Gnostics. See Elaine H. Pagels, "'The Demiurge and His Archons': A Gnostic View of the Bishop and Presbyters?," *Harvard Theological Review* 69, no. 3–4 (1976): 301–324; Elaine H. Pagels, "Conflicting Versions of Valentinian Eschatology: Irenaeus' Treatise vs. the Excerpts from Theodotus," *Harvard Theological Review* 67, no. 1 (1974): 49; Sebastian Moll, *The Arch-Heretic Marcion* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), pp. 47–71. Interestingly, some (typically 'Gnostic') believers, such as the Manicheans, saw the 'serpent' of the Eve and Adam tale in Genesis as being Jesus, in a classic 'inversion' of the story. See Iain Gardner and Samuel N. C. Lieu, eds., *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 17. Indeed, it would seem appropriate that the god seeking to keep his people in ignorance is evil, while the tricky angel or other deity (Prometheus? Lucifer the 'light bringer'? Jesus?) attempting to impart knowledge on (and thus 'save'?) humankind is the hero, particularly if they suffer for it. One potential link between Jesus and Lucifer in the eyes of such Christians may be John 10:34, which has Jesus saying 'ye are gods' (in a re-interpretation of Psalms 82), and Genesis 3:4–5, which has the serpent promise Eve that her disobedience will have her become like God. They may have also associated John 3:13–14, which has Jesus comparing himself with the serpent lifted up by Moses, and claiming that only the one

that of the Sumerian gods Enlil and Enki (known later to the Akkadians and Babylonians as Ea) who likely influenced Canaanite mythology, the humanitarian tale of Prometheus, and eventually, the Yahweh/serpent conflict of Genesis; somehow Yahweh plays the role of the tyrannical and misanthropic Enlil, while the reviled serpent – like Prometheus – inherits much from the benevolent and heroic Enki.[250]

Such possibilities seem quite plausible given the well-known contradictions and other issues with the biblical texts, when God is said to not be the author of confusion and Satan is claimed to be a liar,[251] and also that it is Yahweh – not Satan – that is responsible for the aforementioned biblical genocides.[252] That Lucifer or Satan and also 'the Gnostic God' and the Demiurge, as well as the other gods mentioned in the Tanakh/Old Testament and also the other Jewish writings,[253] could be plausible alternatives to Yahweh alludes to yet more challenges facing the religious exclusivist. Even if Yahweh's existence and status as the God of theism is conceded, there remains the issue of 'which Yahweh?'; as earlier discussed, Yahwistic religions and concepts evolved over time (the concept of the trinity being but one example), and we have different forms of Yahweh amongst – and often *within* – the various biblical books, scholarly/rabbinical interpretations, and so forth.

Canonicity and textual reliability will be crucial, in establishing which of these gods is the true theistic god, and in avoiding idolatry. Potential converts will need to be assured of the reliability of the reception, transcription, and preservation of God's

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who came down from Heaven can ascend to Heaven, with various beliefs about Lucifer's fall, including the tricky serpent's being forced to crawl upon the ground as punishment in Genesis 3:14; the identical chapter and verse numbers concerning the first book of the Torah and the last of the Gospels is surely a coincidence. Interestingly, Isaiah 14:12 and Revelation 22:16 seem to associate both Jesus and Lucifer with the morning star; and Jesus is described as a lion in Revelation 5:5, while Satan is likened to a lion in 1 Peter 5:8. There are also some contemporary Christian concerns about whether various biblical versions should describe Christ as the cornerstone or the 'satanic' capstone, but that perhaps goes too far.

[250]For more on Prometheus' debt to Enki, see the chapter entitled, "Pandora, Prometheus and the Myths of Enki", in Charles Penglase, *Greek Myths and Mesopotamia: Parallels and Influence in the Homeric Hymns and Hesiod* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997). Note also that this all seems to reveal the bankruptcy of claims that 'later Gnostics' produced an inversion of the 'original story'.

[251]See 1 Corinthians 14:33 and John 8:44.

[252]Note that if we are to take the obviously mythical 'original sin' tale in Genesis 3 to be quite literal, it is apparent that Yahweh lied to Eve and Adam about their impending deaths, while the serpent told the truth that they would not, and that they would instead acquire knowledge. They did not die for quite some time, with Adam reaching the ripe old age of 930, as per Genesis 5:5. Even in a theological interpretation, the couple likely avoided a 'true death' by earning immortality in Heaven; something they might have missed out on had they obeyed Yahweh. They might have lived forever on Earth in 'blissful ignorance' or servitude, depending on the interpretation, as can be gleaned from earlier forms of the tale.

[253]This may include the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, the so-called Oral Torah (as in the Talmud), the Dead Sea Scrolls, other intertestamental texts, various rabbinical and kabbalistic writings or their sources, and so forth.

important messages, as well as the reliability of authoritative translations and interpretations. Indeed, many different opinions about such matters has led to great schisms in multiple faiths (itself evidence for religions as natural phenomena),[254] so that there are numerous religions counted among the Christian and Islamic faiths, for example, and also numerous holy text canons. It is possible that so much of the original messages has been lost, so that the 'true religion' is now indiscernible. Oppy rightly noted that the "the evidence of religious experience, religious authority, revelation, and scripture" will not be accepted by all, and that the existence of the Bible suits multiple hypotheses, such as the existence of a malevolent and cunning creature.[255] Such a god might delight in sowing confusion and even in deceiving his own followers.[256] Her cruellest joke lies with the Bible itself, which she provides to her believers, to offer false hope of salvation, from herself.[257]

3.7 Concluding Remarks

Craig's case for theism fails for a plethora of reasons, which extend far beyond the evidential and logical failings of his individual arguments. The case was incomplete, failing to incorporate all the relevant evidence and all the alternative theories. Despite Craig's numerous endorsements of sound probabilistic reasoning, he failed to produce the necessary calculations. He forgoes the useful and transparent Bayesian approach for very superficial inferences to the best explanation. This would have been more fruitful if theism and naturalism were the only two options, since one option's being more probable renders the other less so, but is of no use when it is realised that there are many other alternatives. Furthermore, all the evidence appealed to was easily utilised in arguments for the non-existence of God. Even when largely accepted, Craig's case did not successfully narrow the possibilities to just the monotheistic and theistic god-concepts. The infinitely many possible polytheisms proved a formidable challenge, as did the numerous – and arguably more plausible – pantheisms, panentheisms and pandeisms. Even with transcendent monotheism charitably accepted, it was still not obvious that theism was the most plausible option.

[254] With no supernatural truths buttressing these religions, it is expected that schisms and 'religious evolutions' would occur.

[255] Oppy (AAG), p. 17.

[256] This directly contradicts 1 Corinthians 14:33, which says that God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. Interestingly, such a passage would be very appropriate for a devious and deceitful god, in that she would be lying about lying.

[257] Of course, much of the content of the Old Testament regarding god-sanctioned sexism, bigotry, genocide, theft, slavery, rape, and possibly paedophilia would already be seen my many modern liberals as indicative of a malevolent being, as many Marcionites and other 'Gnostics' came to realise. The exemplar could be Numbers 31, which details the many war crimes committed against the unfortunate Midianites.

Indeed, various forms of deism more successfully dealt with much of the existing evidence, such as the evidence of divine hiddenness. Craig's favouring of theism over its infinitely many alternatives due to simplicity considerations was rejected on the basis that he had not demonstrated that simpler entities or simpler mechanisms do lead to more probable explanations. Furthermore, it was argued that numerous pantheisms provide simpler and more probable explanations of the available evidence than theism, and are generally more evidentially robust. Additionally, and even conceding that priors and perhaps also the likelihoods are to be considered inscrutable, the problem of infinitely many alternatives led to the conclusion that the probability of theism's truth is effectively 0%, revealing that much more effort needs to be expended, than merely proving a first cause, or the existence of objective moral values and duties.[258] My assertion that theism is, at best, equiprobable with all other alternatives is due to the principle of indifference. Craig could object to my use of the principle – though he uses it himself[259] – but since he also effectively acknowledged inscrutable probabilities,[260] the calculation could not proceed; he must then admit agnosticism, which also indicates the use of the indifference principle, and thus, he must admit failure. Or he can finally invoke the principle as I do, and accept that theism's probability is much closer to 0% than it is to 1%. This is a lose-lose scenario. Like Odysseus, Craig must choose to confront either Scylla or Charybdis.

Interestingly, the problems facing the theist and the naturalist are asymmetrical. While infinitely many possible naturalisms do no real harm to the open-minded naturalist, it would be disingenuous to profess that the infinitely many alternative supernaturalisms do not cause problems for the theist. There is a similar asymmetry between the exclusivist theist who requires objectivity and some measure of certainty, and the easygoing a-theist who is comfortable with agnosticism. Consider also the pragmatic implications of this analysis. Many of these alternatives effectively allow people to live as the 'atheist' or naturalist does, to live as if knowledge of god/s is unimportant, such as the deisms, quasi-deisms, pandeisms, other pantheisms, and even certain forms of polytheism.[261] Given the difficulties in arguing for theism's probability, it seems more feasible to demonstrate that theism is logically necessary; that it is logically necessary that there is one god, who is all-good, all-powerful, created the universe *ex nihilo*, etc. However, that has not yet been done and it seems unlikely that it ever will.

For completeness, the truth of theism was then momentarily conceded in order to highlight further challenges. Many issues were identified with regards to the special revelation of God, such as crucial assumptions on God's intending to reveal, and

[258] My main criticisms also apply to, and effectively refute, other cases for theism, such as that found in Swinburne (EG).

[259] See Craig (RF), p. 164.

[260] Ibid., pp. 54–55, 275–280.

[261] For completeness, many naturalistic scenarios would also lead to people believing in the supernatural. Indeed, that may explain our present situation; recall the earlier discussions about pareidolia and contextual priming in §2.7.

whether that would necessarily occur for the benefit of human beings. Possibilities that God's reveal had occurred long before the major world faiths originated, that the revelation may occur far into the future, and that revelations were graced on multiple cultures were also considered. When the scope of possible gods was limited to the Judeo-Christian tradition, it was found that numerous biblical and extra-biblical figures could fulfil the role of God. Yahweh was still not the only option even when the field was narrowed again, to include only the deities of the Christian traditions. Furthermore, if Craig's Yahwist scenario did obtain, there would still be many questions regarding the reliability of the divine communications' reception, transcription, preservation, translation, and interpretation. These pose significant challenges to Christian particularism, as disagreements over such matters have led to great schisms, and presumably, heresy.[262]

As made evident throughout, the discussions between philosophical believers and non-believers need not be limited to whether or not some god/s exists, but can be extended to encompass issues over what god/s is (the god-model that obtains) and who god is (the specific ways in which this god/s has revealed itself). Overlooking the many trenchant criticisms of Craig's arguments outlined in Part 2, the numerous issues with Craig's cumulative case raised in Part 3 must be addressed by his single, remaining argument: Craig's Christological argument from Jesus' resurrection. Utilising unreliable historical texts concerning a humble carpenter from Nazareth,[263] and increasingly scrutinised methods,[264] Craig must somehow eliminate all the naturalistic and supernaturalistic alternatives to his near-impossible Christian theistic hypothesis, and convincingly refute similar claims of non-Christian faiths, in order to demonstrate once and for all, the existence of the Christian theistic God and the exclusive truth of the Christian faith. Whether Craig's climactic and final argument succeeds in overcoming these great and plentiful burdens, shall at last be addressed in the following part of this book.

[262]There are many more reasons for schism, and schisms occur among numerous religious traditions. See James R. Lewis and Sarah M. Lewis, eds., *Sacred Schisms: How Religions Divide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[263]For a useful summary of *some* of the problems regarding the transmission and reliability of the biblical texts, see Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[264]For a critique of many of the criteria for authenticity that are so prominent in historical Jesus research, see Porter (CAHJR). For a more recent – and damning – treatment, see Chris Keith and Anthony Le Donne, eds., *Jesus, Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity* (London: T&T Clark, 2012).

Chapter 4
The Case for Christian Theism

The focus of this part of the book will be on how Craig moves on from generic theism, or actually a generic supernaturalism, to demonstrate the truth of Christian theism.[1] After sowing doubt about the historical sources, I then put forth a Bayesian-inspired argument for the implausibility of miraculous claims being truthful. This allows for a thorough critique of Craig's climactic Christological argument, which relies on the truth of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, whose very historical existence is becoming increasingly questioned. Finally, alternative – particularly Bayesian – Christological arguments shall be analysed, including one supplied by Richard Swinburne.

Though Craig intends his historical and Christological argument from Jesus' resurrection to identify the god supposedly proven to exist through the previous philosophical arguments,[2] the failure of the latter places even greater responsibility on the former.[3] Indeed, as shall soon be revealed, the inductive Christological argument cannot even begin without the conclusions of the

[1]Craig (RF), pp. 24, 247, 287, 333. In later works, it is clarified further that Craig's ultimate aim is to extend his "apologetic case beyond mere belief in God to belief in the biblical God revealed by Jesus". See Craig (OG), pp. 182, 265.

[2]Craig (RF), pp. 207, 247, 333; Craig (OG), pp. 182, 265.

[3]A more concise and less technical form of this critique has since been published. See Raphael Lataster, "A Philosophical and Historical Analysis of William Lane Craig's Resurrection of Jesus Argument," *Think* 14, no. 39 (2015): 59–71.

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R. Lataster, *The Case Against Theism*, Sophia Studies in Cross-cultural Philosophy of Traditions and Cultures 26, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-90793-2_4

previous philosophical arguments.[4] With those inadequate arguments assumed true, Craig's resurrection argument must still point to the truth of theism, comprehensively identify the theistic God as Yahweh, and demonstrate the exclusive truth of the Christian faith, an admittedly difficult set of tasks.[5] Whether or not Craig's argument concerning the life of the carpenter's son is sound, and which of the stated objectives – if any – are fulfilled by it, will here be discussed. Here is a summary of Craig's argument:

1. There are three independently established facts about Jesus: his empty tomb, his post-mortem appearances, and the origin of the disciples' belief in his resurrection.
2. That God raised Jesus from the dead is the best explanation of these facts.
3. Therefore, God exists.[6]

A cursory glance reveals that this argument does not truly identify the God of the philosophers; at best (the argument would claim less if it just argued for Jesus being resurrected), it merely describes an action that she supposedly has taken. Perhaps in recognition of this critical problem, Craig offers the following version, in a recent article:

1. There are three established facts concerning the fate of Jesus of Nazareth: the discovery of his empty tomb, his post-mortem appearances and the origin of his disciples' belief in his resurrection.
2. The hypothesis "God raised Jesus from the dead" is the best explanation of these facts.
3. The hypothesis "God raised Jesus from the dead" entails that the God revealed by Jesus of Nazareth exists.
4. Therefore, the God revealed by Jesus of Nazareth exists.[7]

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[4]Craig has since clarified that his resurrection argument is indeed an argument *from* God's existence, when notified about my *Think* article on his resurrection argument. Claiming that he did not read my article, Craig also acknowledged that his hypothesis may be more ad hoc than alternative explanations, due to the assumption of God's existence, though he tries to minimalise this. The latter appears absurd, given the central theme of his work. See William Lane Craig. "Is my Argument for Jesus' Resurrection Question-Begging?," accessed 18/05/2016, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/is-my-argument-for-jesus-resurrection-question-begging. Craig was later asked if he had any thoughts about my work, replying, "Nope" (in a semi-public communication with attorney James W. Cushing, via Facebook, August 3, 2016). Swinburne's Christological argument also proceeds from God's existence, as we shall later see. And as with Craig, Swinburne is aware of Philipse's unrelenting *God in the Age of Science?*, but has not read all of it. See Raphael Lataster, "On Richard Swinburne and the Failings of Christian Theistic Evidentialism," *Literature & Aesthetics* 26, no. 1 (2016): 37.

[5]Indeed, the fact that many people change their religions or doctrines – sometimes several times – should serve as a warning concerning exclusivist beliefs.

[6]Craig (RF), pp. 395–399; Craig (OG), pp. 219–264.

[7]William Lane Craig. "Is the Material World all there is? Arguments for the Existence of God," accessed 06/12/2013, http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2013/08/06/3819108.htm.

4.1 The Facts

Craig begins by referring to independently "established facts" about Jesus, which is a startling claim, given the state of the sources. Before these sources are briefly critiqued, including a discussion on how this could lead scholars towards agnosticism over whether a historical Jesus existed at all, Craig's method for establishing his 'facts' will be analysed.[8] Apart from his frequent appeals to authority, Craig relies on the criteria of authenticity: tools used by Jesus researchers to discover the nuggets of truth buried within the legendary material of the biblical texts, in order to determine what it is that Jesus really said and did.[9] This is already something of a counter-intuitive development, as these are tools, constructed and used by critical scholars who already reject the Christ of Faith that Craig believes in, which work on the premise that the New Testament is filled with mythical embellishments. It is necessary, then, to understand what the various criteria are and how reliable they are.[10] Recall David Noel Freedman's admission that biblical scholars need to approach their sources with "somewhat looser standards".[11]

This likely refers to the speculative criteria of authenticity, which are becoming increasingly criticised by scholars.[12] The criterion of multiple independent attestation, for example, is usually useful, but can only have limited application with regards to Jesus. As shall be discussed in the following subsection, the main sources for information on the Historical Jesus are the Gospels, which are anonymous, and the later ones are clearly influenced by Mark. Also important are the Epistles, which

[8]I have earlier argued for the position of Historical Jesus agnosticism, that it is not certain that a historical Jesus existed, and also supported Richard Carrier's defence of Jesus mythicism, the view that Jesus did not exist as a historical person. Much of this work will be referenced and summarised below. For far greater detail, see Raphael Lataster, "Jesus Scepticism: An Examination of the Arguments for Various 'Jesus as a Myth' Theories" (Master's thesis, University of Sydney, 2013); Richard Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus: Why We Might Have Reason For Doubt* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2014); Raphael Lataster, "The Fourth Quest: A Critical Analysis of the Recent Literature on Jesus' (a)Historicity," *Literature & Aesthetics* 24, no. 1 (2014): 1–28; Raphael Lataster, "It's Official: We Can Now Doubt Jesus' Historical Existence," *Think* 15, no. 43 (2016): 65–79. The latter article was published by Cambridge University Press, and I have also presented a well received paper, by believers as well as non-believers, on this and related issues at Oxford University. See Raphael Lataster, "The (Overwhelming) Improbability of Classical Theism" (paper presented at the Oxford Symposium on Religious Studies, Oxford, 1st August 2016).

[9]Craig (RF), pp. 395–396.

[10]The uses of the criteria, and other issues concerning historical method, were covered in more detail in the Introduction.

[11]Hershel Shanks, "How the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old Testament Differ: An Interview with David Noel Freedman – Part 1," *Bible Review* 9, no. 6 (1993): 34.

[12]Stephen Law, "Evidence, Miracles and the Existence of Jesus," *Faith and Philosophy* 28, no. 2 (2011): 129–151; Chris Keith and Anthony Le Donne, eds., *Jesus, Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity* (London: T&T Clark, 2012). I earlier discussed this and the criteria's failings in greater detail. See Lataster (JS), pp. 21–27; Raphael Lataster, "Bayesian Reasoning: Criticising the 'Criteria of Authenticity' and Calling for a Review of Biblical Criticism," *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences* 5, no. 2 (2013): 271–293.

says almost nothing of a historical Jesus, and what it does say can also cohere with alternative theories about Jesus. Criteria of embarrassment and dissimilarity are similarly unhelpful, as apart from the sources examined, it is unknown what those Jews and Christians would have believed, to say nothing of the arrogance in assuming that there was only one 'pure' form of Judaism, from which one 'pure' form of Christianity branched off.

Such criteria are highly speculative, as well as circular. An example of how this can work against specifically Christian believers is when it is applied to the non-canonical *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, which claims that Jesus killed a young boy for clumsily bumping into him.[13] This seems an extraordinarily embarrassing claim of a supposedly peaceful, loving and forgiving saviour, so it 'must' be true. Interestingly, while Craig would likely reject this passage, he has stated that the criteria can be used on such "apocryphal gospels".[14] Craig is particularly fond of such criteria, declaring it too embarrassing for early Jewish Christians to fabricate the story that it was women who first discovered the empty tomb, a dubious claim,[15] ignoring the possibility that the Gospel authors were trying to make a point about this new faith's obvious differences – such as its more inclusive nature towards all sexes – from its parent faith.[16] Such reasoning is especially suspect, as there will always, necessarily, be differences between new sects and the older ones they stem from; otherwise there is no syncretism and evolution, and thus no new sect.

It is here worth noting that Mark's empty tomb narrative seems farcical, with the inexplicably unprepared – despite intending to anoint Jesus' body – women comically asking each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"[17] There is much that is implausible about Mark's account, with Mary Magdalene's role being of chief importance. It is surely not insignificant that she,

[13]Ronald F. Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas: With Introduction, Notes, and Original Text Featuring the New Scholars Version Translation* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 1995), p. 109.

[14]Craig (OG), p. 195.

[15]The testimony of Jewish women seems to have been trusted after all. See Judith Romney Wegner, *Chattel or Person?: The Status of Women in the Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 119–127.

[16]Craig (RF), pp. 367–368. Note that Craig refers only to Josephus and the Talmud for this apparently incorrect claim about women, with no support from Christian writings, or even the Old Testament. He similarly thinks it unlikely that Jesus' burial by Joseph of Arimathea would be fabricated. See Craig (OG), p. 224. Rather, this story could indicate that the new faith is so inclusive, that even 'the worst' of people (Joseph being a Jewish Sanhedrist) are permissible. Interestingly, Reginald Fuller sees this story as legendary, going so far as to consider if Joseph was "a pure invention". See Reginald Horace Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2007), pp. 54–56. Consider also Paul's apparent progressivism in Galatians 3:28.

[17]Mark 16:3. Perhaps a fabrication illustrating that God will eventually reward and provide for the uncertain-but-faithful, as seemingly indicated in earlier parables (Mark 4). The later Matthew 6:26–27, revealing that God even provides for the 'birds of the air', might better illustrate this point, however.

one of the alleged witnesses to the empty tomb, possibly the first (depending on which Gospel account is most accurate),[18] was likely not of sound mind and prone to hallucinations and delusions, if she existed at all.[19] Interestingly, Mary was one of the few named witnesses to Jesus' death by crucifixion,[20] and is one of only two named people who observed Jesus' burial and/or burial location.[21] Mary Magdalene was also supposedly the first to meet the risen Jesus (contradicting Paul's earlier claims in 1 Corinthians 15),[22] and whether directly after witnessing the empty tomb or later, after experiencing Jesus' first post-mortem appearance, she was the one who delivered the 'good news' to Jesus' closest followers.[23] Additionally, this all is not even the account of what seems to be a supremely doubtful – though entirely sympathetic – eyewitness (Mary of Magdala), but the claims of much later, anonymous and unqualified authors (Mark and company).

Furthermore, this narrative might be alluding to earlier Egyptian stories of Isis (with help from Nephthys, making two women, as in Matthew's 28:1) finding (most of) the body of the slain Osiris, another dying-and-rising saviour god.[24] *Embarrassingly*, the missing body-part was the all-important divine penis, so perhaps Osiris' story too should be seen as historical. Craig also invokes the embarrassment criterion when noting James' disbelieving in Jesus during the latter's lifetime,[25] which overlooks one of Jesus' most insightful teachings, illustrated in the very same Gospel: "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house".[26] Craig is seemingly unaware that much – perhaps all – of the

[18]See Mark 16, Matthew 28, Luke 24, and John 20.

[19]Little is known of her, though Luke 8:2 includes Mary Magdalene in a group of women suffering from "evil spirits and diseases", specifying that she was possessed by multiple demons. Cf. Mark 16:9. This is exactly how superstitious and unsophisticated ancient peoples would have perceived mental illnesses. For links between claims of possession and schizophrenia, see Miriam Azaunce, "Is It Schizophrenia or Spirit Possession?," *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless* 4, no. 3 (1995): 255–263; S. N. Chiu, "Historical, Religious and Medical Perspectives of Possession Phenomenon," *Hong Kong Journal of Psychiatry* 10, no. 1 (2000): 14–18. Even a conservative paper, which casually and absurdly refers to demons as actually existing, which clearly begs the question, admits to the similarities. See M. Kemal Irmak, "Schizophrenia or Possession?," *Journal of Religion and Health* 53, no. 3 (2014): 773–777.

[20]Mark 15:40.

[21]Mark 15:47.

[22]According to the contentious Mark 16:9. Note also that Mary Magdalene's omission in Paul's writings on the resurrection is very curious, given her key role according to the Gospel accounts.

[23]Mark 16:10–11, Luke 24:9–10.

[24]Geraldine Pinch, *Handbook of Egyptian Mythology* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2002), p. 79. Note that numerous scholars actually deny the veridicality of the empty tomb narrative. One reason is that there are many similarities with earlier Pagan myths, such as those concerning Romulus. See Richard C. Miller, "Mark's Empty Tomb and Other Translation Fables in Classical Antiquity," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129, no. 4 (2010): 759–776.

[25]Craig (RF), p. 379.

[26]Mark 6:4.

Jesus story is a parable, an allegorical *story* designed to illustrate some important lessons, despite the first Gospel being filled with parables.

It is also easily imagined that the potentially 'embarrassing' and undignified portrayal of the suffering Messiah's death by crucifixion was exaggerated in order to further highlight and magnify the eventual triumph, as well as to artificially fulfil prophecy.[27] Such embellishing may even seek to veil even more embarrassing truths; that the 'real Jesus' died in an unfortunate carpentry accident, for example, or by unceremoniously succumbing to his lusts like Alexander the Great and eventually dying of syphilis. Overstating historical events is not without precedent amongst ancient Jewish authors, as is evidenced by the biblical account of God's Angel slaughtering 185,000 Assyrian soldiers, supposedly leading to King Sennacherib's retreat.[28] The Assyrians' records – which do acknowledge defeats – make the more believable claim that they ceased their conflict with Judah after receiving large tributes; and they probably appreciated being able to focus their militaristic efforts elsewhere.[29]

The criterion of coherence makes assumptions about genuine facts about Jesus that are actually unknown, while the dubious criterion of vivid narration purports that more detailed accounts are more probably authentic. This ignores the great detail evident in many works of fiction, and directly contradicts the criterion of least distinctiveness. Perhaps the worst criterion of all is that of Aramaic context, as if signs of an underlying Aramaic teaching behind the Greek words of the Gospels, for example, indicate that it originates directly from Jesus, or his closest associates in life. Surely scholars cannot imagine that Jesus and his closest followers were the only Aramaic-speakers of first-century Palestine. The strongest indictment of such methods is given by the result of employing them, and particularly in using them to conclude more than what is reasonable. Craig tries to argue for his first premise on the basis of scholarly consensus.[30] However, Craig's consensus is non-existent; recall John Dominic Crossan's finding the *lack* of consensus to be a black mark on the discipline, an "academic embarrassment".[31] Furthermore, numerous scholars actually doubt some or all of these 'minimal facts', such as the empty tomb claims, as shall soon be discussed.

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[27]Of course, billions of Christians throughout history did not/do not find Jesus' death embarrassing. On the foreshadowing of a suffering Messiah figure, see Isaiah 52–53. There is yet more in the oft-overlooked inter-testamental literature.

[28]2 Kings 19:35–36.

[29]For a theologian's perspective, though he rightfully acknowledges this "fairy-tale", see A. R. Millard, "Sennacherib's Attack On Hezekiah," *Tyndale Bulletin* 36, no. 1 (1985): 61–77. For a more sceptical approach, see Finkelstein and Silberman (BU), pp. 259–263.

[30]And yet, according to the Gospel account, it was scholarly consensus that condemned Jesus to death. See Mark 14:53–65.

[31]Crossan (HJ), p. xxviii.

4.1.1 The Sources and Jesus Agnosticism

It is scarcely possible to critique the methods of Historical Jesus researchers without also discussing the sources, which is the next topic of discussion. Craig places great trust in not only the methods used by historical Jesus researchers, but also in the sources they base their arguments on. This is rather unfortunate as these sources are highly suspect. The extra-biblical textual sources concerning Jesus pose numerous problems, and are generally taken to be relatively late and derivative.[32] One thing scholars lack is a document written by Jesus himself, possibly containing elucidating statements such as "I am the son of Yahweh" or "It is regrettable that a few irrational people seem to think that I oppose basic human rights, and that I – a mere mortal – am able to perform miracles, thanks to the power granted me by a deity I do not even believe in, and that probably does not exist. By the way, I'm gay."[33]

It is inevitable that the focus for scholars investigating what it is that Jesus really said and did, and whether he even existed at all, will be on the seeming hagiographies that are the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke and John. Numerous problems become evident, not the least of which is that these documents are not primary sources; that is, they are not contemporaneous to the events in question, and they are not written by eyewitnesses (or at least the latter point is not confirmed). This is no small matter, with influential historians such as Leopold von Ranke and Louis Gottschalk asserting the importance of such documents, particularly with regards to determining the validity of secondary sources, which is what the Gospels technically are.[34] While apologists may expectedly downplay the fact that no primary sources concerning Jesus' life are extant, it should be intuitively obvious to uncommitted scholars just how important such sources would be. Without earlier sources, we might never be able to determine what nascent Christianity was like. This dearth of primary sources is also very 'surprising' – 'improbable' to the Bayesian – given Jesus' alleged fame.[35] Also, it could be seen as advantageous for Gospel authors creating fiction to be removed by several decades from the described events, so that actual contemporaries are senile and/or few in number, reducing the chance of being contradicted and criticised. Interestingly, while there exist no eyewitness and/or contemporary accounts of Jesus' after-death (and fleshly/earthly) appearances, such primary sources do exist regarding other figures, such as Indian guru Sri Yukteswar.[36]

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[32]Lataster (JS), pp. 47–61. Craig agrees on the latter point, noting that "they don't really tell us anything new". See Craig (OG), p. 185, and also William Lane Craig, "Rediscovering the Historical Jesus: The Evidence for Jesus.," *Faith and Mission* 15, no. 2 (1998): 17.

[33]Secular Historical Jesus researchers would certainly appreciate such a source, especially one whose authenticity and textual integrity could not be doubted. For example, Yeshua Bar-Yosef, *My Rather Insignificant Life* (Jerusalem: Sandy Temple Press, 29), p. 13.

[34]Ranke (HRG), p. xi; Gottschalk (UH), p. 165.

[35]See Matthew 4:23–25, 14:1, and Luke 5:15.

[36]Gary R. Habermas, "Resurrection Claims in Non-Christian Religions," *Religious Studies* 25, no. 2 (1989): 170.

In any case, historians attempt to determine the usefulness of available sources by taking into account authorship, localisation, composition date, credibility, their own source material, and whether they have been faithfully transmitted from the original forms.[37] Unfortunately, scholars do not know who wrote the Gospels, and when they wrote them. They do know that Gospels are biased, evangelistic, and make numerous implausible historical claims.[38] The source materials – if any – are generally unknown,[39] the originals are lost, and the many variant manuscripts suggest that the documents were not as faithfully transmitted as might be hoped. New Testament critic Bart Ehrman generally agrees and notes that the Gospels are exactly the sorts of sources that historians do *not* want, in establishing what probably happened in the past.[40]

Hector Avalos takes issue with the supposed lack of critical thinking skills of biblical scholars who simply accept (at least in part, as supernatural claims may generally be omitted) what the Gospels say about Jesus, and also takes issue with scholars 'privileging' the texts.[41] He further notes (incidentally, in a debate with Craig) that scholars should not claim that the Gospels' stories are evidence of the events in question, but that they are merely evidence that the stories existed.[42] Pieter Craffert recognises that even critical Historical Jesus research – which he thinks is in crisis – emerged from a 'caretaker framework' and relies on ontological assumptions, whilst himself endorsing alternative analyses of the sources.[43] Robert M. Price agrees that scholars often claim more than they ought, declaring that using critical tools with ruthless consistency would leave scholars with complete agnosticism with regards to Jesus' very historicity.[44] This somewhat echoes a Bultmannian type of

[37]Cf. Garraghan and Delanglez (GHM), p. 168.

[38]On the latter point, I am mostly referring to miraculous claims. This pertains more to Craig's second premise, so for now, I shall attempt the even greater challenge of demonstrating the reasonableness of scepticism regarding the quite mundane Historical Jesus, as opposed to the more easily dismissed Christ of Faith or Biblical Jesus.

[39]Obvious sources such as the books of the Tanakh or Old Testament and the inter-testamental literature cannot, of course, confirm the historical events described in the later New Testament books.

[40]Ehrman (DJE), p. 42; Bart D. Ehrman and Michael Licona, *Debate – Can Historians Prove Jesus Rose from the Dead?* (Matthews, NC: Southern Evangelical Seminary, 2009), DVD.

[41]Avalos (EBS), pp. 68–69, 77, 91, 117.

[42]Hector Avalos and William Lane Craig, *The Resurrection of Jesus: Fact or Fiction?* (La Mirada, CA: Biola University, 2004), Audio CD. Similarly, Tucker asserts that biblical critics and historians are concerned with "the explanation of the evidence, not whether or not a literal interpretation of the evidence corresponds with what took place". See Tucker (OKP), p. 99.

[43]Pieter F. Craffert, "Caretakers, Critics, and Comparativists: A Meta-Analysis of Historical Jesus Research," *Journal for the Study of Religion* 25, no. 2 (2012): 111–135. Note that the likes of Carrier (whose defence of mythicism is discussed in the following subsection) and myself might just be performing such alternative analyses, by setting aside long-held assumptions, and entertaining various possibilities where the sources are not intended to portray genuine historical events.

[44]Robert M. Price, *The Incredible Shrinking Son of Man: How Reliable is the Gospel Tradition?* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2003), p. 351.

minimalism,[45] which does not involve questioning Jesus' historicity (which is admittedly controversial); that while Jesus' historical existence may be certain, the state of the sources means that New Testament historians cannot truly know much more than that.[46]

Note that minimalism – after decades of controversy – is already entrenched in scholarship concerning the Old Testament, and may eventually become more widespread in New Testament research, none of which is insignificant given that the latter texts, and its associated claims about Jesus, draw largely from the former.[47] Generally, numerous scholars, including Bultmann, already dispute even the mundane biblical claims such as Jesus' tomb being found empty.[48] It is also worth noting that much about the New Testament's Jesus has clearly been influenced by earlier religions and myths, including some clear parallels with the Tanakh's Wisdom, the inter-testamental Son of Man, and Philo of Alexandria's *Logos* figure, which hints at significant levels of fabrication.[49] With the Gospels giving scholars much cause for doubt, Craig turns to the Pauline Epistles.[50] Interestingly, Paul's incapability and unsuitability for historical research is exposed by his own hand:

> I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.[51]

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[45]Rudolf Bultmann (b. 1884) was an influential New Testament scholar, who downplayed the 'facts' concerning the historical Jesus and stressed the importance of faith.

[46]Cf. "I do indeed think that we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and often legendary; and other sources about Jesus do not exist." See Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word* (New York: Scribner's, 1935), p. 8. For more on this minimalist stance, see David Seeley, *Deconstructing the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), p. 14; Darrell L. Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus: a Guide to Sources and Methods* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), pp. 144–145; Rudolf Bultmann, *The New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings*, ed. Schubert M. Ogden (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989).

[47]For some discussion on Old Testament minimalism, see Thomas L. Thompson, "Is The Bible Historical? The Challenge of 'Minimalism' for Biblical Scholars and Historians," *Holy Land Studies* 3, no. 1 (2004): 1–27; Megan Bishop Moore and Brad E. Kelle, *Biblical History and Israel's Past* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011).

[48]Robert H. Stein, "Was the Tomb Really Empty?," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 20, no. 1 (1977): 24–25; Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 230. Liberal Christian John Shelby Spong is also somewhat of a minimalist, and also disputes the veridicality of the resurrection claims. See John Shelby Spong, *Resurrection – Myth or Reality?: A Bishop's Search for the Origins of Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994). Consider also Christian scholars who even deny a Historical Jesus, such as Thomas Brodie, a Catholic priest, and Edward van der Kaaij, a Protestant pastor. See Thomas Brodie, *Beyond the Quest for the Historical Jesus: Memoir of a Discovery* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2012); Hanna Daych. "Jesus didn't exist, but a "myth", says banned pastor," accessed 24/03/2015, http://www.nltimes.nl/2015/02/08/jesus-didnt-exist-myth-says-banned-pastor.

[49]See Lataster (JS), pp. 93–100.

[50]Craig (RF), p. 362.

[51]Galatians 1:11–12.

> For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. . . .[52]

Paul never claims otherwise. Whenever he mentions his sources, it is either direct revelation from the Lord, or indirect inspiration from Old Testament and perhaps other earlier Jewish writings. No humans from first-century Palestine, historical or otherwise, were consulted, as Paul himself acknowledges. Or they were, and Paul is simply lying. Interestingly, if Paul is being truthful, his total lack of knowledge of Jesus from human sources seems impossible so that the soon-discussed 'Celestial Jesus theory' seems very plausible, and the liar option thus seems necessary if there was an Earthly Jesus. Indeed, apologists generally 'make' Paul a liar by pointing to the likely knowledge he gained from alleged eyewitnesses like Peter and James. Either way, there is little reason to trust Paul,[53] and even this may be a moot point, as he says nothing substantial regarding the Historical Jesus, apart from what may also apply to alternative hypotheses of Jesus, such as Paul-Louis Couchoud's positing of a purely Celestial Christ.[54] Paul's unreliability as an author is further problematic for Craig's case, since he – a Jew who not insignificantly already believes in the same god – is our only known author claiming to have met the risen Jesus, and even this may not have occurred on Earth.[55] This too affects the Bayesian analysis since God would plausibly want to convince Pilate, numerous Roman folk, the Chinese, and all of the people of the world. Instead, this very sparse and unimpressive evidence is more consistent with a handful of people lying or hallucinating.

Given the state of the sources, and the fact that their existence can also be explained by alternative theories regarding Jesus, it seems reasonable – if not blatantly obvious – to deduce that positing certainty over Jesus' sayings, deeds, and even his historical existence, as Craig does in (1), would be disingenuous. Contrasting my criticisms of the sources,[56] particularly of the Gospels, Craig provides five reasons why they should be considered generally reliable.[57] The first is that "There was insufficient time for legendary influences to erase the core historical

[52] 1 Corinthians 15:3–4.

[53] Cf. Gerd Lüdemann, "Paul as a Witness to the Historical Jesus," in *Sources of the Jesus Tradition: Separating History from Myth*, ed. R. Joseph Hoffmann (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2010), p. 212. Paul also seems to be, by his own admission, a bit crafty, as in 2 Corinthians 12:16. Furthermore, while discussing some of his revelations, Paul claims that he was given a messenger of Satan to harass him, so that he could stay grounded. See 2 Corinthians 12:1–10.

[54] Lataster (JS), pp. 73–92. Mainstream critical scholars suppose that Jesus was a historical figure that became gradually mythicised. The likes of Paul-Louis Couchoud, Earl Doherty, and Richard Carrier theorise that Jesus was initially a 'mythical', celestial figure that became gradually historicised. For example, see Earl Doherty, *Jesus: Neither God Nor Man* (Ottawa: Age of Reason Publications, 2009).

[55] Cf. 2 Corinthians 12:2 and recall the claims about revelation.

[56] I have elsewhere gone into more detail, regarding all the 'early' sources about Jesus. See Raphael Lataster, "Questioning the Plausibility of Jesus Ahistoricity Theories – A Brief Pseudo-Bayesian Metacritique of the Sources," *Intermountain West Journal of Religious Studies* 6, no. 1 (2015): 63–96.

[57] Craig (OG), p. 188–189.

facts". While this claim is multiply fallacious, and possibly irrelevant, the example of Sathya Sai Baba shows that contemporaneous legendary embellishments can and do occur, so that the approximately 40 year gap between the end of Jesus' life and the first Gospel does not at all preclude mythical development.[58] This claim is also unfortunate because the writings of the earliest Christian authors reveal the diversity of early Christianity.[59]

The second reason extraordinarily asserts that fictional tales "rarely concern actual historical individuals", while the Gospels discuss "real people. . . real events. . . and real places". Numerous fictional stories, particularly of the genre of historical fiction, include such elements, revealing Craig's claim to be bankrupt.[60] Craig's third reason explicitly assumes the reliability of Jewish and Christian oral tradition, which is difficult to prove,[61] and implicitly – and unjustifiably – assumes a homogenous view of Judaism and early Christianity. Indeed, critical scholars like Zeba Crook cast considerable doubt on the reliability of memory and oral transmission, particularly as the oral tradents are no longer available for questioning, with Crook going so far as pessimistically saying that the oft-used criteria are bankrupt, the Quest for the Historical Jesus has failed, and that we are now in a period of No Quest.[62]

The fourth reason is that the presence of still-living eyewitnesses and the apostles while the Gospels were penned would prevent embellishments, which is unreferenced, unverifiable, and simply naïve. It is also possible that the apostles, if they had any association with the authors at all, actually *encouraged* them to make exaggerated claims, in the interests of evangelism. Finally, Craig claims that "The gospel writers have a proven track record of historical reliability", which is plainly false. The sources are quite poor, which should allow significant scepticism regarding the supernatural claims made therein, the more mundane claims, and even Jesus'

[58]Lawrence A. Babb, "Sathya Sai Baba's Magic," *Anthropological Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (1983): 116–124. Note that the numerous contemporaneous accounts concerning Sai Baba's miracles constitute vastly better evidence than that for Jesus' miracles. It may also be worth considering that Josephus' alleged mention of Jesus, with the most obvious interpolations removed, seems to portray a very different Jesus, though it too was supposedly written several decades after Jesus' lifetime.

[59]For some examples, see 2 Corinthians 11 and Christopher W. Skinner and Kelly R. Iverson, eds., *Unity and Diversity in the Gospels and Paul: Essays in Honor of Frank J. Matera* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012).

[60]A critically-acclaimed example would be Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, trans. Louise Maude and Aylmer Maude (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[61]Even Christians argue against this notion. See Theodore J. Weeden, "Kenneth Bailey's Theory of Oral Tradition: A Theory Contested by Its Evidence," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 7, no. 1 (2009): 3–43. See also Jacob Neusner, *Rabbinic Literature and the New Testament: What We Cannot Show, We Do Not Know* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004).

[62]For example, see Zeba A. Crook, "Collective Memory Distortion and the Quest for the Historical Jesus," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 11, no. 1 (2013): 53–76 and Zeba A. Crook, "Matthew, memory theory and the New No Quest," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 70, no. 1 (2014): 1–11. For more on false memories concerning the anomalistic, see Christopher C. French and Krissy Wilson, "Incredible Memories – How Accurate are Reports of Anomalous Events?," *European Journal of Parapsychology* 21, no. 2 (2006): 166–181.

historical existence. While my case for Historical Jesus agnosticism is controversial, though it is far more nuanced than the more extreme mythicist view, it has received significant scholarly support, particularly from the field of Religious Studies,[63] and is actually unnecessary in refuting Craig's argument, though it adds to the general refutations of (1) and (2).[64] Nevertheless, for completeness, the manner in which mainstream secular New Testament critics defend Jesus' historicity shall be briefly considered, as well as how the case for agnosticism can be enhanced as a case for mythicism, before addressing Craig's second premise.

The first in a recent spate of books addressing Jesus' historicity, Ehrman's *Did Jesus Exist?* asserts that the Christ of Faith is a myth, and attempts to argue that the existence of a Historical Jesus is a certainty.[65] Ehrman explains that the task of the historian is to establish "what probably happened in the past", and admits that "we cannot prove a single thing historically".[66] He also acknowledges the many problems posed by the Gospels, and other sources, that I outlined above.[67] His primary tactic in demanding that Jesus' historical existence be considered unquestionable, despite the fact that knowledge of Jesus stems from highly questionable sources, is troubling: Ehrman posits numerous written sources behind the documents that are currently available.[68] He even posits numerous oral sources behind those sources.[69] Some of these non-existing sources are in another language, Aramaic, which apparently yields strong evidence that Jesus existed.[70] Not a word is said on why these non-extant, anonymous, and hypothetical sources, whose composition dates, genre, intent, and veridicality is all unknown, should convince the uncommitted critical scholar. This is especially puzzling given that the same scholar acknowledges that much of the content in the Gospels is ahistorical; surely even more scrutiny should

[63]Such scholars include Hector Avalos, Carole Cusack, and Christopher Hartney. See Hector Avalos. "Raphael Lataster's New Book on Jesus Mythicism," accessed 22/06/2014, http://debunkingchristianity.blogspot.com.au/2013/09/raphael-latasters-new-book-on-mythicism.html; Carole M. Cusack, review of *There Was No Jesus, There Is No God: A Scholarly Examination of the Scientific, Historical, and Philosophical Evidence & Arguments For Monotheism*, by Raphael Lataster, *Literature & Aesthetics* 23, no. 2 (2013): 144–146; Christopher Hartney, review of *There Was No Jesus, There Is No God: A Scholarly Examination of the Scientific, Historical, and Philosophical Evidence & Arguments For Monotheism*, by Raphael Lataster, *Alternative Spirituality and Religion Review* 5, no. 1 (2014): 171–174.

[64]Much of this subsection could have 'merely' highlighted the uncertainty regarding the sources that Craig trusts so vehemently, and need not have mentioned the possibility of Jesus' ahistoricity at all.

[65]For my detailed review of the recent (2012–2014) literature on the topic by Ehrman (historicity), Casey (historicity), myself (agnosticism), and Carrier (mythicism), see Raphael Lataster, "The Fourth Quest: A Critical Analysis of the Recent Literature on Jesus' (a)Historicity," *Literature & Aesthetics* 24, no. 1 (2014): 1–28.

[66]Ehrman (DJE), pp. 37–38.

[67]Ibid., p. 42 and throughout.

[68]Ibid., pp. 78–83.

[69]Ibid., pp. 83–86.

[70]Ibid., pp. 87–93.

apply to the *hypothetical* sources behind them.[71] Furthermore, it is left unstated why the hypothetical sources must support Ehrman's position, and not, say, Couchoud's, or even Craig's.[72]

Maurice Casey's later *Jesus: Evidence and Argument Or Mythicist Myths?* 'builds' on Ehrman's foundations of sand, somehow resulting in work that is even more incompetent, as well as vulgar. Like Ehrman, Casey suffers from a sort of source amnesia, finding it rational to assume the reliability of the Gospels due to hypothetical sources – whose reliability is unknown – behind them.[73] He also argues for the Gospels of Mark and Matthew to be dated much earlier, presumably to avoid the problem that Paul's overwhelmingly ahistorical portrayal of Jesus is the earliest on record. Casey's method here is bizarre, arriving at a date range of 39–70 CE for Mark's composition date, unconvincingly settling on "c. 40 CE".[74] Supplying a date range of 50–70 CE for Matthew's composition, Casey inexplicably declares that it "makes perfect sense c. 50 CE".[75] Giving some clue as to his unexplained and befuddling method, Casey echoes Freedman, in almost admitting that he and his colleagues are uncomfortable with the uncertainties necessitated by the poor sources regarding Jesus, so they simply redefine what good historical methodology is: "the criteria reasonably used by historians writing about important political figures such as Julius Caesar need modification in dealing with the historicity of Jesus".[76]

Besides its historical inadequacies, Casey's book is oft bemusing, error-strewn, mean-spirited, and some passages are deeply offensive. He thinks that Gospel of Mark was written by a Mark, simply because it was "one of the commonest names in the Roman Empire".[77] He falsely claims that all mythicists are former Christian fundamentalists,[78] and rely on late-dating the Gospels.[79] Casey refers to many mythicists as "'scholars'" (quotation marks included), despite including the likes of bona fide scholars such as Thomas L. Thompson, Bart Ehrman (who clearly should not have been on the list, given his recent book), and Emanuel Pfoh.[80] He

[71] I have since presented a well-received paper on this troubling method, which is currently being adapted as an article. See Raphael Lataster, "The Gospel According to Bart: The Folly of Ehrman's Hypothetical Sources" (paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Australian Historical Association, Sydney, 7th July 2015). The only objector in the audience filled with secular and other historians was a Christian sociologist.

[72] In an intriguing twist, a later book has Ehrman himself raising many doubts about his hypothetical sources, and the memories, fictions, and eyewitness accounts that allegedly preceded them. See Ehrman (JBG).

[73] Maurice Casey, *Jesus: Evidence and Argument or Mythicist Myths?* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 75, 103.

[74] Ibid., p. 86.

[75] Ibid., p. 94.

[76] Ibid., p. 66.

[77] Ibid., p. 82.

[78] Ibid., p. 44.

[79] Ibid., p. 49.

[80] Ibid., pp. 10–26.

refers to Mary as having been "preggers",[81] and notes Edward Carpenter's being "a gay anti-Christian socialist", as if sexual orientation or politics has any relevance to the soundness of an argument.[82] If the case for Jesus' existence were so certain, surely such esteemed academics would not need to appeal to non-existing sources and ad hominem argumentation. Indeed, it is possible to convincingly argue not only that Jesus' historical existence is uncertain, but also that it is very unlikely.

4.1.2 Jesus Mythicism

If it is rational to question Jesus' very historicity, something that would not seem inherently improbable, it would certainly become even more difficult to argue that the resurrection of Jesus is a historical event, and that it involved God. Indeed, the evidence being this inadequate is far more expected on alternatives such as a naturally evolving religious tradition. But Jesus' historicity is not only reasonably questioned. It is increasingly becoming rational to outright deny it, with even mainstream New Testament specialist James Crossley recognising that "debates over the historical existence of Jesus. . . are turning up closer to the mainstream of historical Jesus studies."[83]

Like my own work arguing for agnosticism, Richard Carrier's *On the Historicity of Jesus* shares the rare distinction of being agnostic/mythicist literature that has been peer-reviewed and published with academic presses.[84] He attempts to argue for Jesus' ahistoricity by utilising transparent Bayesian methods, clearly described in his earlier *Proving History*.[85] Carrier makes it clear that the hypothesis he is defending is "minimal mythicism".[86] This is not the mere claim that Jesus did not exist, but the hypothesis that, as earlier argued by others, Jesus was initially believed to be a purely celestial figure and came to be historicised over time.[87] Carrier first establishes the prior probabilities,

[81]Ibid., p. 114.

[82]Ibid., p. 234.

[83]James G. Crossley, *Jesus and the Chaos of History: Redirecting the Life of the Historical Jesus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 171.

[84]Such work is usually published by amateurs, or bona fide scholars from outside the relevant academic fields of History, Religious Studies, and Biblical Studies.

[85]Carrier's *Proving History* provides an excellent explanation of Bayes' Theorem and its historical uses, as does Aviezer Tucker's earlier effort. See Tucker (OKP). For a simplified description, and a discussion of the uses of Bayesian approaches in judging the veridicality of certain religious claims, see Raphael Lataster, "Bayesian Reasoning: Criticising the 'Criteria of Authenticity' and Calling for a Review of Biblical Criticism," *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences* 5, no. 2 (2013): 271–293.

[86]Carrier (OHJ), pp. 18–55.

[87]Carrier acknowledges that Doherty's theorising led him to seriously consider Jesus' non-existence. See ibid., p. xii. Doherty, in turn, seems to have been influenced by Couchoud. My own interest in this area was piqued by the oft-vilified Acharya S. It is worth noting that

employing the 'Rank-Raglan hero' reference class, which Jesus fits very closely, according to certain parts of the Gospels, which are rightly no longer used in further evidential analyses.[88] This reference class includes elements such as the figure being the son of a god, dying atop a hill or some other high place, and eventual confusion as to the body's location.[89] With few – if any – of the figures that conform to most of the characteristics of the 'Rank-Raglan hero' being confirmed historical, Carrier is actually generous in declaring the prior probability of Jesus' historical existence at 33%.[90]

It is immediately obvious that the case for Jesus is in dire straits, as the consequent probabilities (how expected the evidence is on each hypothesis), which need to overcome the low prior, must rely on our highly problematic sources. Most of the extra-biblical sources are predictably discarded for being too late, derivative, and for most likely not being truly independent.[91] The Gospels and Acts of the Apostles are largely omitted also, as they are multiply unreliable, and these relatively late mixtures of myth and – at least what purports to be – history would actually be expected if a celestial/mythical Jesus was later historicised *and* if a historical Jesus later became mythicised.[92] The burden of overcoming the low prior probability for historicity, then, must fall on the even more problematic Epistles. Of course, Carrier finds much there that is surprising if Jesus existed (such as Paul's silence on Jesus' ministry, miracles, and earthly life in general), and curious passages that expectedly (traditionalists see the Epistles as depicting events after those of the Gospels) and unexpectedly indicate that Jesus, is a purely celestial figure, including:

> We speak a wisdom among the mature [*i.e. the fully initiated: see Element 13*], a wisdom not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age [*archontōn tou aiōnos toutou*], who are being abolished, but we speak God's wisdom, in a mystery, that has been hidden, which God foreordained before the ages [*aiōnōn*] for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age [*archontōn tou aiōnos toutou*] had known. For if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. But as it is written, 'Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of a man, those things God prepared for those who love him'. For God revealed them to us through the Spirit. . . (1 Cor. 2.6–10).[93]

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sometimes amateurs come up with good ideas, while qualified scholars can make very poor arguments.

[88] Ibid., pp. 235–253.

[89] Ibid., pp. 229–230.

[90] Ibid., p. 243.

[91] Ibid., pp. 281–358.

[92] Ibid., pp. 359–509.

[93] Ibid., p. 564.

This passage indicates that Jesus was killed by non-earthly and malign beings, which is a view certainly not limited to mythicists.[94] After all, had human authorities known who Jesus was and what his death would accomplish (their – and everyone else's – salvation), they would have had even more reason to kill Jesus, not less, as Paul asserts. It would only be the likes of Satan and his followers, who would be defeated by Jesus' atoning sacrifice, who would have refused to kill Jesus, had they known who he truly was.[95] Such thinking is not necessarily outlandish, particularly when there existed apocalypticist Jews that were waiting for a Celestial Messiah to defeat the celestial demons.[96] As Carrier recognises, this interpretation coheres well with the celestial Jesus' death and resurrection portrayed in the early and non-canonical Christian document, the *Ascension of Isaiah*.[97] Generally, Paul's Epistles, silent on historical details, does seem to support a more spiritual or celestial interpretation of Jesus' life. A choice can be made then, on the primacy of Paul's spiritual portrayal of Jesus' death, or the (relatively) more historical portrayal in the Gospels. Given the earlier dating of Paul's writings, it is unreasonable, and even confessional or dogmatic, to conclusively rule out that the later documents are simply appropriating and historicising elements of the earlier ones.

I would also add that in Paul's account of the risen Jesus,[98] there are no earthly post-mortem appearances; there are only visions of an otherworldly Jesus.[99] No references to a post-mortem Jesus strolling about Palestine and commanding his followers are to be found. In other words, Paul does not seem to realise that the Resurrection and the Ascension are separate events. This may be because Jesus was never on Earth, as the mythicists propose. On this interpretation, it is no wonder that Paul fails to mention one of the major facts supporting Jesus' resurrection: the empty

[94]Samuel Brandon makes clear that Paul attributes the Crucifixion to demonic powers rather than to Pilate and the Jewish leaders, further indicating that Paul portrays the Crucifixion as a non-historical event. See Samuel George Frederick Brandon, *History, Time and Deity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1965), pp. 168–190. Ellingworth and Hatton claim that, "A majority of scholars think that supernatural powers are intended here". See Paul Ellingworth and Howard Hatton, *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1985), p. 46. See also Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 56; Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 233–236.

[95]Cf. Doherty (JNGNM), p. 105. Doherty further links this passage to Ephesians 3:9–10, which also seems to refer to ignorant spiritual powers, and Ephesians 6:12, wherein Paul explicitly states that their struggle is not against 'flesh and blood' but against evil spirits in the heavens.

[96]Even Bart Ehrman, a vocal critic of mythicism, admits to this. See Bart D. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee* (New York: HarperOne, 2014).

[97]Carrier (OHJ), p. 565.

[98]1 Corinthians 15.

[99]Such visionary or revelatory appearances are found throughout the Epistles, and even the appearances mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15 provide no Earthly context, and are 'tainted' by the Greek word *opthe*, which often refers to supernatural visions. Paul may well refer to a purely celestial Jesus.

tomb in Jerusalem.[100] In fact, despite trying to allay doubts about Jesus' resurrection, Paul only refers to revelation and scripture, with no appeal at all to the historical 'facts' that the Gospels describe.[101]

Eventually, Carrier mathematically argues that the probability of Jesus' historical existence is 33% at best, and far less than 1% at worst.[102] As yet, no relevantly credentialled scholar – via academic book, article, or book review – has properly critiqued this argument; the only such review had endorsed the conclusion.[103] Apologists like Craig sometimes consider that if the existence of Jesus is doubted, then figures like Socrates must also be doubted, in what could easily amount to a scorched earth tactic; Craig does this, for example, in his debate with New Zealand media personality Brian Edwards.[104] This could at best lead to a temporary Pyrrhic victory, since the agnostic could simply call the apologist's bluff – being far more content with such hard scepticism than the exclusivist and sectarian theist – and emerge as Queen of the Ashes and Lord of the Cockroaches.

As one final point I wish to reveal a rather unfortunate – for historicists – asymmetry, again, concerning the evidence supporting the Historical Jesus theory and the Celestial Messiah theory, earlier intimated in my other work. The Gospels portray neither; they describe the Christ of Faith. Historicists and mythicists both posit a different understanding of Jesus that preceded the Gospel's version of Jesus. Unfortunately for the historicist, there is not a single piece of evidence, pre-New

[100]Craig is aware that Paul does not mention the empty tomb, and tries to overcome this fact by reading into the text things that are not there; seemingly a common approach in biblical scholarship, and formerly known as eisegesis. See Craig (RF), p. 365. Craig is not the first to assume that post-mortem appearances entail an empty tomb. This approach seems especially egregious when Paul seems to declare that resurrection bodies await believers in Heaven. See 2 Corinthians 5:1–5.

[101]See 1 Corinthians 15:12–19. All this indicates that the apologetic tactic of claiming Paul's audience to be familiar with the Gospel accounts is erroneous.

[102]Carrier (OHJ), pp. 596–600.

[103]Raphael Lataster, review of *On the Historicity of Jesus: Why We Might Have Reason for Doubt*, by Richard Carrier, *Journal of Religious History* 38, no. 4 (2014): 614–616. I have since written a book (forthcoming) that goes into much more detail on these issues, and argues that not only is it irrelevant that scholars questioning Jesus' historicity tend to come from outside the field of New Testament studies, but that it is ideal and even necessary.

[104]See William Lane Craig and Brian Edwards. "Easter Debate: Craig vs. Edwards," accessed 01/03/2016, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/media/craig-vs-edwards. In my opinion, Edwards had the upper hand in this, and their next debate. He fared better than any other atheistic debate opponent of Craig's. Craig also responded to a question about his specific god with, "it's not my god, I'm his", which seems unnecessarily evasive. Interestingly, Edwards has noted that many New Zealand churchgoers do not believe in the supernatural. This coheres some with the phenomenon of religious leaders who no longer believe literally in what they teach. See Daniel C. Dennett and Linda LaScola, "Preachers Who Are Not Believers," *Evolutionary Psychology* 8, no. 1 (2010): 122–150. There are also ministers who are open about their atheism. For example, see Gretta Vosper, *With or Without God: Why the Way We Live is More Important than What We Believe* (Toronto: Harper, 2008).

Testament, for the mundane Historical Jesus. As mentioned above, this is not the case with the Celestial Messiah, who some pre-Christian Jews did honour, as even Bart Ehrman now acknowledges.[105] As described above, when then analysing Paul's writings with both these theories in consideration, it becomes clear that Paul's Jesus sounds very much like this Celestial Messiah, and it becomes apparent that some Pauline (and other early, pre-Gospel) passages are better explained by the Celestial Messiah theory and that the supposedly pro-Historical Jesus passages in Paul's Epistles are ambiguous and/or interpolated.

Now it is not at all necessary, in critiquing Craig's argument, that Jesus' existence be questioned, or even that Craig's assumed facts about Jesus be declared uncertain.[106] It is interesting, however, that even Craig's least objectionable premise is doubtful. Furthermore, while the Christian scholar might gleefully point to such ahistoricity theories as fringe and unlikely, they are naturalistic, and thus are actually *far more likely* than the supernatural hypotheses apologists prefer. Craig's argument, then, relies on very shaky foundations. Nevertheless, Premise 1 can be charitably granted, as there are even bigger problems with the second premise, as well as the 'third'.

4.2 The Miraculous Hypothesis

I shall first lay the foundations for my own Bayesian analysis of the claim of Jesus' resurrection, then discuss Craig's four chapters of *Reasonable Faith* that support his argument, in order to determine if my estimates need much adjusting.[107] My final Bayesian calculation will then conclude this section. After some historiographical

[105]Ehrman refers to the Son of Man of 1 Enoch as the "cosmic judge of the earth", and acknowledges that some considered him to be the Messiah, and worshipped him. See Ehrman (HJBG), pp. 66–68. In the same chapter, Ehrman also argues that since there are Jewish texts that outlaw angel worship, there must have been Jews worshipping 'non-God' divine beings. Sounding very much like those who deny the Historical Jesus, Ehrman explains that there were Jews who called angels 'gods', who believed in angels that warred and brought peace in Heaven, and who perceived Enoch as an angelic being. He also gives a nod to 'Wisdom' and 'Logos', and admits that Philo of Alexandria describes his Logos as divine, as God's first born. Ehrman even realises that the Tanakh made it very easy for Jews to incorporate similar ideas from the Ancient Greeks, such as the Wisdom figure appearing in Proverbs 8, and Genesis 1's 'creative Logos'.

[106]For example, see Richard C. Miller, *Resurrection and Reception in Early Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 2015). Without needing to doubt Jesus' historicity, Miller argues that the Gospels make clear that the resurrection narratives therein are purely legendary, so that trying to determine the probability of the resurrection's truth is utterly futile.

[107]Interestingly, Craig seemed somewhat favourable of a Bayesian approach regarding miracles, but (again) dismissed it regarding Jesus' resurrection due to apparently inscrutable priors. See Craig (RF), pp. 271–276. This is not a problem with the Bayesian method, but with his goal of showing Jesus' resurrection to be probable. An inscrutable prior probability means an inscrutable posterior probability. Perhaps it is this eschewing of a transparent probabilistic approach that allows the apologist to proclaim their beliefs as reasonable.

discussion, Craig agrees with Bayesians that "in history we should accept the hypothesis that provides the most probable explanation of the evidence".[108] Craig then criticises some historians' "presupposition of naturalism", noting that such scholars could not even seriously consider Jesus' resurrection as being historical, and asking on what grounds supernaturalistic explanations should be dismissed.[109] The answer is simple: historians have no choice but to look at the past through the lens crafted in today's empiricism.[110] We must apply the principle of analogy; today's laws of nature are probably identical to yesterday's, and tomorrow's.

There is simply no evidence from the physical sciences, for example, that it is possible for people to walk on water (physics), turn water into wine (chemistry), or come back from the dead (biology), despite the ample sample sizes. Interestingly, if such things were possible, then the Jesus portrayed in the Gospels is generally in accordance with natural reality and loses much of his mystique. In other words, if miracles were inherently likely, it is doubtful that we would currently be discussing the significance of Jesus' resurrection. It is its very implausibility – at least in a frequentist's sense – that makes the claim 'miraculous'. It is effectively by definition, then, that miraculous explanations are antithetical to the practice of good historians who try to determine the most probable explanations. Note that Jews and Christians can especially agree that miracles are supposed to be improbable, as the example of Elijah and his conflict with the priests of Baal makes clear.[111]

It is worth noting that methodological naturalism is more contentious in New Testament research than it ought be. Zeba Crook, who also endorses methodological naturalism or methodological atheism, has recognised that even many liberal scholars are hesitant in properly criticising miraculous claims.[112] He rejects the concessionary methodological agnosticism of Ninian Smart:

> Methodological agnosticism may have begun as a route to polite and civil discourse, but it has become a barrier to allowing religion to be studied like other fields in the humanities. Miracle claims from ancient religion tell us a great deal about the people who made those claims and about how they saw their world. They are therefore indispensable data, but they are not data of actual events just because that is how the ancients experienced them.[113]

[108] Ibid., p. 234.

[109] Ibid., pp. 238–239.

[110] In other words, there is no reason to suppose that the laws of nature were different several thousand years ago, than they are today. We thus assume uniformity. Cf. Ernst Troeltsch, *Religion in History*, trans. James Luther Adams and Walter F. Bense (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1991), p. 13.

[111] Almost everything Elijah does serves to make the eventual miracle seem more unlikely, hence making it more reasonable to believe that the eventual happening was caused by God rather than naturalistic processes. The authors knew that miracles were supposed to be improbable. See 1 Kings 18. In the Jesus myth, perhaps the tomb being sealed with a large stone is also stressed in order to further point to its removal and the tomb's being empty as support for the miraculous resurrection. See Mark 15–16.

[112] Zeba A. Crook, "On the Treatment of Miracles in New Testament Scholarship," *Studies in Religion* 40, no. 4 (2011): 461–478.

[113] Ibid.: 470.

> The problem with relying on the supernatural to explain events in history is that it is anti-intellectual and anti-historical (McCutcheon 2006: 243): it stifles debate and discovery. If one grants that miracles can happen, or to put it differently, that God is active in history, then the necessity of intellectual enquiry into explaining historical events evaporates.[114]

Now such supernatural miracles are impossible, according to the laws of nature as they are currently understood. If this can be genuinely labelled a 'presupposition of naturalism', then so be it. There is no contemporary evidence for supernatural happenings, and this is contrasted with mounds of evidence for naturalistic occurrences. But the case against Craig's supernaturalistic hypothesising is stronger than that, for such miraculous events need not be assumed *impossible*. Once again, the point can be conceded to Craig. Given that Craig agrees that history is essentially a probabilistic study,[115] it is only necessary that his historical *claims* of miraculous events be deemed *improbable*. After all, investigators are not dealing with a possible miracle that they are witnessing now, can repeat, and so forth; they are dealing with a historical claim of a miracle. Determining whether a recent claimed miracle is historical or not can be complex, as even a claim made earlier today could be consigned to history, but the present matter concerns a claim made many centuries ago. In any case, arguing that historical miraculous claims are unlikely to be true is exceedingly easy.

All the objective historian needs do, in something of a Humean fashion,[116] is consider how many miraculous or supernatural claims made throughout the history of the world, have been confirmed as true.[117] This historical frequency is important background knowledge, which affects our prior probabilities. Craig pays lip service to the importance of background knowledge, but clearly does not understand how to incorporate it, supposing that while there is no good background knowledge for the resurrection, which is true, there is also no good background knowledge for alternative theories.[118] This is incorrect, as fabrication – as but one example – is known to

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[114]Ibid.: 474.

[115]Ehrman also agrees that as historians cannot know or prove what actually happened in the past, they are concerned with establishing what probably happened in the past. See Ehrman (JAPNM), pp. 96, 195–196, 227.

[116]While I would like to avoid the apparently Humean notion that a miraculous claim could not be proven in principle, my approach is Bayesian, and appears Humean, and his approach to miracles has been judged – via similar Bayesian analyses – by others as being generally sound. See Philip Dawid and Donald Gillies, "A Bayesian Analysis of Hume's Argument Concerning Miracles," *Philosophical Quarterly* 39, no. 154 (1989): 57–65. Furthermore, it does seem that Hume was aware of Bayes' Theorem. See David Raynor, "Hume's Knowledge of Bayes's Theorem," *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 38, no. 1 (1980): 105–106. While he may not have used it, or formalised his argument mathematically, his argument essentially encapsulates the principles of Bayes' Theorem. There are those who think that Hume was too strong in arguing against miracles, such as that he rules them out *a priori*, but others believe that Hume is being misunderstood. See Robert J. Fogelin, *A Defense of Hume on Miracles* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005). In any case, I do not argue that miracles are impossible or that they are impossible to prove. They are 'merely' extraordinarily improbable.

[117]This could also be narrowed to resurrection claims. Note also that I need only refer to such claims being unconfirmed, rather than being disproved.

[118]Craig (RF), p. 239.

frequently, and easily, occur. Anybody can invent a miraculous claim, at any moment, though not everyone can actually perform a miracle at any time. Also, regarding alternative theories entailing that Jesus did not die upon the cross, it is known that others in the first century did survive crucifixion.[119]

A particularly striking example of survival from crucifixion comes from Chariton's fictional tale, *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, which merits further contemplation. Probably written in the middle of the first century, around the time that Paul started writing his Epistles, and preceding the Gospel of Mark, Chariton's book is a – perhaps the first – *historical novel*, features historical characters, and influenced later writings. In the story, Chaereas is unjustly sentenced with crucifixion, is made to carry his own cross, was relatively silent, and survives the ordeal. More importantly, Callirhoe 'dies', and is placed in a tomb, but was only in a coma, so 'resurrects'. She is abducted, so the tomb is found empty, and this is taken to be evidence of her alleged resurrection or assumption.

Omitting Jesus and associated Judeo-Christian traditions, even many Christian believers such as Craig would admit that the number of confirmed miracles is zero, unless they wish to counter-productively argue for the veridicality of opposing religions' claims. Apologists could claim that there are indeed other miracles wrought by demons, but this would be a very counter-productive approach indeed, as it leaves critics unable to distinguish between Godly and diabolical miracles; note that genuine miracles of God would still be very rare – i.e., improbable – and Jesus may be an agent of Satan.[120] Some believers acknowledge the difficulty in arguing for miracles. For example, the late Anglican priest Barnabas Lindars acknowledged that *all* miraculous claims should be scrutinised:

> The second reason is historical. The religious literature of the ancient world is full of miracle stories, and we cannot believe them all. It is not open to a scholar to decide that, just because he is a believing Christian, he will accept all the Gospel miracles at their face value but at the same time he will repudiate the miracles attributed to Isis. All such accounts have to be scrutinized with equal detachment. Furthermore, it is not only modern people who find miracles difficult to believe. Unbelief is a feature of the resurrection stories in Matthew, Luke and John. Luke represents Paul as faced with a barrage of scepticism from his hearers in Athens. . . .[121]

If there have been 98 such claims (or families of claims) throughout history, an exorbitantly low estimate in order to privilege Craig's view, then there are 0 out of 98 confirmed supernatural claims. Applying Laplace's rule of succession, to avoid a figure of 0%, we have 1 out of 100 confirmed historical miraculous/supernatural claims. This figure of 1% can act as the prior probability in a Bayesian analysis of

[119]For example, see Josephus, *The Life of Flavius Josephus* 75.

[120]Indeed, that many miracles may not originate with God should further justify even believers being sceptical regarding claims of miracles wrought by God. For some examples and warnings of such diabolical miracles in the Bible, see Exodus 7, 2 Thessalonians 2:9, Matthew 24:24, 1 John 4:1, and Revelation 16:14.

[121]Barnabas Lindars, "Jesus Risen: Bodily Resurrection But No Empty Tomb," *Theology* 89, no. 728 (1986): 91.

Jesus' resurrection, and also associated miraculous claims. Note that we could allow that some miraculous claims are veridical, while still recognising that most are not, and thus still have a justifiably low prior probability. By contrast, it is exceedingly easy to fabricate a miraculous claim, resulting in fabrication hypotheses having high priors. For example, last year I witnessed my friend walk on water, after she resurrected several people. Not only is my claim associated with a direct eyewitness account, unlike the evidence for Jesus' miracles, but also there were 50,000 eyewitnesses to this event, which makes the mere 500 'eyewitnesses' in the New Testament seem paltry.[122]

It already appears to be the case that such an analysis could not possibly favour the hypothesis of Jesus' resurrection over the hypothesis that Jesus was not resurrected, as the more direct evidence would have to be 100 times relatively more probable on the former, which I dub the 'consequent probability differential', just to get the posterior probability to an 'agnostic' 50%. In other words, the consequent probability may be high for one theory, but may also be high for others (particularly problematic if the other theories have higher priors), so that it is the magnitude of difference between them that is significant. Given the unreliability of the sources, and the fact that they are also explainable on alternative – even including ahistorical – theories about Jesus, this is essentially unfeasible. No 'presupposition of naturalism' was necessary.

[122]Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:6. I am not claiming this tale to be true. I merely illustrate the ease of fabricating such a claim, and that further claiming *x* witnesses, does not mean there were *x* witnesses. Note also the thousands of Catholics in contemporary times, who have experiences of Mary. Somehow Craig, a non-Catholic, finds this less reliable than his evidence. Note that while Paul's claim about the more than 500 witnesses can be rejected out of hand, a group hallucination is possible. Consider Zeba Crook's thoughts on the work of Peter Craffert: "At the 2010 meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, in a session on social-scientific and cognitive science approaches to Jesus' resurrection (all of which were etic), Peter Craffert took a comparative anthropological approach. Craffert argues that putative differences between vision (which is objective) and visions (which are subjective) do not hold up from a neuroanthropological perspective. The brain cannot tell the difference; it only receives information, but it cannot distinguish objective from subjective. To the human brain, it is all equally "real." Recorded out-of-body experiences and electrode stimulation of the brain both illustrate that the mind can "see" things, and experience them as real, without external stimulus (e.g., seeing something material). In short, "vision and visions rely on very similar processes, and for that reason visions can be more real than ordinary vision – to such an extent that the subjects themselves cannot determine what is really out there and what is not"" (2010: 9). Craffert refers to the ethnographic work of American anthropologist Bruce Grindal, who lived among the Sisala clan of Ghana for over 2 years. One night, Grindal participated in a death divination ceremony, during which the corpse rose, spun, danced, and played drums. Grindal saw it, as did others in the room (but interestingly, not all present saw it). Of course, Grindal was under no illusion that this event happened in any material sense. He was able to "see" it because he had by then become sufficiently inducted into Sisala culture. Grindal, though a scientifically thinking westerner, had entered into the "consensus reality" of the group. Consensus reality becomes a way of overcoming the problematic distinction between objective and subjective vision. One can see things that are real but not material when one lives in a consensus reality in which these things happen." See Zeba A. Crook, "On the Treatment of Miracles in New Testament Scholarship," *Studies in Religion* 40, no. 4 (2011): 475.

There are alternative explanations that seem more plausible, such as the relevant Gospel claims being intentionally embellished or partially fabricated (the mainstream view), the sources being wholly fabricated, perhaps via allegory (the mythicist view), or the sources unintentionally misreporting the actual events (e.g., the body may have been misplaced). We already know that many people exaggerate, and that this is quite common regarding religious claims. Indeed, exaggerations and outright deceptions can lead to religious claims. Consider an example of a shocked virgin woman, and her equally surprised male fiancée, finding out that she is pregnant.[123] The woman might claim to have been impregnated by a deity. Or she was swimming in a dirty pool, into which a man had masturbated. Or perhaps the best answer is one of the simplest: infidelity. Given the outlandish nature of the stated alternatives, we would be forgiven for preferring the most plausible options.[124]

Nevertheless, again being very generous to Craig's theory, it shall be estimated that the evidence in the sources is twice as likely on Craig's theory than on the (umbrella) theory that Jesus was not resurrected. This is absurdly generous, as the evidence for the resurrection, namely several sources that claim that it happened, while initially convincing to some, is unimpressive on closer inspection, given that we should expect much more than a handful of non-eyewitness and non-contemporary sources, that really stem from one (the Gospel of Mark), which is a highly allegorical and evangelical document, written by an anonymous author; this evidence is also consistent with the sort of evidence for non-veridical miraculous claims. Having the reliable testimonies of multiple independent witnesses to Jesus' resurrection could, in principle, overcome a very low prior probability,[125] but such evidence is unfortunately not in our possession. And note that even related evidence – mere claims – was apparently not enough to convince Thomas, one of Jesus' closest followers; he would only accept a direct form of evidence, which Jesus eventually gave him (though, unfortunately, not us).[126] Now before the calculation is completed, numerous other points made by Craig shall be analysed, partially to ensure that the above probability estimates are reasonable.

Adding more nuance to his argument, Craig admits that people do not simply come back to life; he clarifies that his claim is actually that "God raised Jesus from the dead".[127] This is at least partly reasonable. Miracles can thus be confirmed as probable, but only when they are performed by God or his representatives. However,

[123] See Matthew 1.

[124] There are many claims about 'virgin pregnancies' in contemporary times, which prompt researchers to recognise that they "may still face challenges in the collection and analysis of self reported data on potentially sensitive topics". See Amy H. Herring et al., "Like a virgin (mother): analysis of data from a longitudinal, US population representative sample survey," *The BMJ* 347, no. 7938 (2013): doi:https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.f7102. Incidentally, the Zoroastrian messiah is supposed to be born from a virgin bathing in a lake containing Zoroaster's semen.

[125] Cf. John Earman, *Hume's Abject Failure: The Argument Against Miracles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 53–59.

[126] John 20:24–29.

[127] Craig (RF), p. 239.

this is highly problematic due to the discoveries in Parts 2 and 3, shall be discussed further in the next section, and is somewhat irrelevant to my calculation, which shall overlook the question over whether God was involved. This is for Craig's benefit, as considering the background knowledge concerning God would drop the probability to virtually 0%. Compounding the problem, it cannot be assumed that the god of Judaism would approve of or want to raise Jesus, who – as the Mandaeans thought – may have been one of the many false prophets of the time (nor can we assume that the god of theism is the god of Judaism);[128] note the radical changes to the Jewish faith that Jesus called for.[129] That Jesus was unaffiliated with the Jewish theistic god would have been perfectly reasonable and consistent to believe, given the altered or refined message/s and the immutability of God. Indeed, the stark differences between the Tanakh god and the New Testament god, and also between the laws/doctrines, have caused many challenges for Christians today, and historically.[130] It would seem that Craig is once again reasoning in a circle, simply assuming about Jesus and the Judeo-Christian god the very things he is supposed to be establishing.[131] Craig understands this problem:

> In the case of Jesus' resurrection the probability of Jesus' resurrection on the background information Pr(R|B) depends, we have seen, on the probability that God would raise Jesus of Nazareth from the dead Pr(R|G), which is speculative.[132]

> What is the probability relative to that background information that God would raise Jesus of Nazareth from the dead? Well, I don't think really we have any way of assigning any value to that with any confidence. I think we can't say it is improbable because God is free to do what he wants; but how can we say that it is probable that he would do that? Maybe what would be more probable, given Jewish thinking, would be that God would wait until the end of history and then raise Jesus from the dead along with everybody else, and then everybody would see that he is God's Son and would go into the kingdom of God and he would be vindicated. How do we know what God would do just given the background information (no evidence concerning the empty tomb or the appearances)?[133]

Admitting speculation, Craig's solution is to make, what he calls, an inference to the best explanation, which is of little value since his hypothesis – without consid-

[128]This seems unlikely, given the polytheistic origins of Yahweh, as earlier discussed. Also keep in mind that "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light". See 2 Corinthians 11:14.

[129]It seems plausible that Jesus did indeed teach things that were, from a Jewish perspective, 'wrong'. Jesus' contradictions with various books of the Tanakh and his conflicts with mainstream Jews of his time are well known. For example, see the chapter entitled "The Anti-Biblical Jesus" in Avalos (BJ). Also helpful, though more confessional, is Steve Moyise, *Jesus and Scripture: Studying the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010).

[130]Regarding the latter, recall the comments about the sect of Marcion and certain Gnostics in §3.6.

[131]That this god approves of Jesus, sent Jesus, and so forth. Of course, this is what the resurrection argument was supposed to establish.

[132]Craig (RF), p. 359.

[133]William Lane Craig. "Doctrine of Christ (part 23)," accessed 21/06/2016, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/defenders-2-podcast/transcript/s6-23.

erations of the prior probabilities – cannot be shown to be probable, as he himself realises.[134] This approach is inconsistent,[135] and is invalid, as it allows theists to refine their hypothesis – as per theodicy – to better align with the evidence, without accounting for the resulting lower prior probability. This approach is also counter-productive since naturalists and alternative supernaturalists can do likewise, such as worshippers of the all-evil god explaining away the gratuitous good in the world,[136] meaning that Craig cannot dismiss naturalistic resurrection hypotheses and polytheistic or sub-maximal god-concepts as inherently improbable. With all hypotheses refined to perfectly fit the evidence, and inscrutable priors overlooked, our choice of the infinitely many explanations is reduced to rolling an x-sided die. In other words, using Craig's 'Pyrrhic victory' method, whatever the evidence, a-theism easily overwhelms theism. Craig, as the one arguing for theism, is the one who most needs the transparent probability calculus he tries to avoid. So whether we adopt my approach (probability calculus incorporating priors) or Craig's approach (probability calculus overlooking priors), the result is the same: the probability that Christian theism is true is almost 0%.

This all highlights that Craig's premise is too compact; it ought to differentiate between the event of the resurrection and the cause of the resurrection. It must be made clear whether this is an argument *from* the resurrection or *to* the resurrection. Craig then attempts to shift the burden of proof by claiming that it would be up to "the naturalist" to explain that God's existence or intervention is implausible.[137] After bemoaning "the blandishments of postmodern relativists",[138] Craig makes clear the importance of objectivity to his theory;[139] certainty is a requirement for his worldview, which is certainly suitable for those promoting religious exclusivism.[140]

Focussing on whether miracles are possible, he notes the presupposition of God's existence made by Christian critics of Spinoza's and Hume's arguments against miracles.[141] Given the weakness of his previous arguments, Craig is obviously guilty of this also. He leads readers to consider what a miracle actually is (for example, is it an impossible event, impossible but for God's intervention, or simply an unlikely

[134]Craig (RF), pp. 271–276, 359–360.

[135]In both of these sources, Craig refers to the ad hocness of an explanation. But that does affect the prior probability. He fails to see his inconsistency in dismissing ad hoc naturalistic explanations, whilst – since God is not proven – crafting a very ad hoc explanation of his own. It seems that Craig is open to utilising prior probabilities after all, but only when it suits him.

[136]Similarly, the supporters of a brutal dictator could suppose that she had good but hidden reasons for perpetrating her many atrocities, and also good but hidden reasons for keeping those reasons hidden. This does not stop critics from declaring, based on current evidence, that the dictator was evil and guilty of crimes against humanity.

[137]Craig (RF), p. 240.

[138]Ibid., p. 241.

[139]Ibid., p. 242.

[140]Ibid., p. 287.

[141]Ibid., p. 258.

and possibly natural event?), which is largely irrelevant and unnecessary to this critique of his specific claim.[142] He settles on miracles being impossible events made possible only by God, which merely begs the question.[143] Craig then displays his lack of analytical depth, by uncritically invoking Paul in arguing that Jesus' resurrection resulted in a "transformation of the body", and asking why this event only happened once, which makes many unjustified assumptions – given his lower standards of evidence – regarding the resurrection claims of other figures.[144] He also wonders if God has supplied sufficient evidence, but not for those "whose hearts are closed".[145]

Craig then embarrassingly objects to "a slogan beloved in the free thought subculture that 'extraordinary events require extraordinary evidence.'", actually proving it, using Bayes' Theorem, as I did earlier.[146] His objection is in effect unnecessary, as the maxim concerns 'extraordinary claims' whereas Craig essentially argues that Jesus' resurrection is not particularly implausible – because God did it – so that it is not 'extraordinary'. His objection is also counter-intuitive, as he seems to implicitly accept the maxim. He moves on from claiming that Jesus' resurrection is not extraordinary to arguing that extraordinary evidence is not required, in perfect accordance with the adage. Craig is correct, however, in noting that the slogan is "commonsensical".[147] Of course, 'common sense' does not necessarily mean 'fallacious'. Indeed, a woman's claim that she met with her human girlfriend yesterday would not require much evidence to convince others. Had she instead claimed that she met Martians, much more evidence would doubtless be required. Yet more 'plausible yet still implausible' scenarios are imaginable, that do not involve supernatural or paranormal elements, such as a destitute person's claim to have recently purchased a new Ferrari.

Moving on from his thoughts on historical methods and the problem of miracles, Craig attempts to establish the reliability of the sources. Regarding the book of Acts, he claims that historian of Rome A. N. Sherwin-White asserted that, "the historicity of the narrative is indisputable".[148] This is quite deceptive, as Sherwin-White

[142]Ibid., pp. 259–263. Note that failing to assume dualism leads me to the regularity theory of natural law, that whatever happens is part of reality and need not be deemed 'supernatural'.

[143]Ibid., p. 263.

[144]Ibid., p. 268.

[145]Ibid., p. 269.

[146]Ibid., pp. 269–273. On p. 274, he further exposes his ignorance regarding Bayes' Theorem and its uses, by objecting to Hume's alleged use of frequencies. That is often how probabilistic and even Bayesian reasoning works. Hopefully, over time, more data will result in these admittedly limited frequencies better reflecting whatever 'objectively true' values might exist. Bayesian reasoning cannot incorporate the information we do not yet have, and the information we will never have. It only tells us, based on the information we do have, what is the most reasonable hypothesis to believe. On p. 280, he seems to indicate that Hume was unaware of Bayes' Theorem, which is refuted above.

[147]Ibid., p. 273.

[148]Ibid., p. 294.

actually – as was appropriate to his specialisation – commented on how the Roman legal system was portrayed, and does not at all provide a thorough case for the truth of all the claims made in Acts.[149] This speaks to the reliability of Acts as a historical document no more than the realistic political portrayals in the popular *A Song of Ice and Fire* novels prove their status as reliable historical documents.[150] It is as if Craig expects all fiction to be entirely divorced from the real world.

To his credit, Craig does acknowledge that "there is some sort of distinction to be drawn between what Jesus was actually like and what historical inquiry can establish about Jesus", and admits that, "Because historical inquiry is uncertain, our conclusions will be provisional".[151] In the midst of speculating on Jesus' self-understandings (specifically, arguing for a high Christology), via passages excised from documents whose veridicality is still unconfirmed, Craig mimics Ehrman and Casey in referring to a hypothetical Aramaic source (the veridicality of which would obviously be even harder to establish), thinking that it counts in favour of authenticity.[152] Somehow Craig overlooks that the Gospel writers fail to identify these sources, and display not a hint of textual criticism, unlike Philostratus' writings on the Christ-like Apollonius of Tyana.[153] He also inadvertently reveals Luke's incompetence as a chronicler of history, referring to his omitting an 'embarrassing' saying, which seems to contradict his earlier view that the author of Acts was a very capable historian.[154] Making further assumptions grounded in the Gospels, Craig uncritically asks, "why not accept him as the divine Son of God, just as the earliest Christians did?"[155]

After discussing the importance of historical debates over Jesus' alleged resurrection, Craig finally moves to explain his second premise.[156] He asserts that two steps are required in his argument, namely that historical facts must be established, and that he convincingly argues that his hypothesis is the best explanation of those facts.[157] Given that Craig's facts and hypothesis are direct claims made by the same sources, this seems suspicious, and Stephen Law's bracketing concept proves

[149] Adrian Nicholas Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).

[150] In fact, many of the political machinations of the novels echo events from the Wars of the Roses and the Hundred Years' War. See James Lowder, ed. *Beyond the Wall: Exploring George R. R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire, From A Game of Thrones to A Dance with Dragons* (Dallas, TX: BenBella Books, 2012), pp. 39, 124–125.

[151] Craig (RF), p. 297.

[152] Ibid., pp. 311–312. See also Craig (OG), p. 191.

[153] See Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana: Books 1–4*, trans. C. P. Jones (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 1.2–3.

[154] Craig (RF), p. 312.

[155] Ibid., p. 327.

[156] Ibid., pp. 333–349.

[157] Ibid., p. 350.

illuminating.[158] Law criticises apologists who "bracket" the supernatural portions of the Gospels in order to argue for the truth of the more mundane portions, so that they can use these facts to then argue for the truth of the miraculous claims.[159] It is the apologist's version of money laundering. Craig's strategy could arguably be applied to any piece of fiction. Simply remove the supernatural and/or implausible elements, assert the rest as 'true', and then conclude that these incontestable facts indicate that the supernatural elements are also true. What else could explain all those facts?

Craig also explains that while Bayesian approaches can be useful, he prefers to make an argument to the best explanation, unaware that this is still, effectively, a Bayesian approach.[160] He also hints at an appeal to ignorance, declaring that if no plausible natural explanation can account for the facts as well as his resurrection hypothesis, then the latter should be accepted.[161] Craig begins with establishing the 'fact' of the *empty tomb*, which is actually doubted by many scholars,[162] even those who are Christian.[163] Here Craig applies the maligned criteria of authenticity to the very Gospels – and the hypothetical sources behind them – that I earlier argued were unreliable, and relies on assuming the primacy of the Gospels' account in referring to

[158]Critics can speculate as to whether it is simply coincidental that Craig's explanation of the facts is identical to what the sources outright claim, and that it happens to align with his personal religious views.

[159]Stephen Law, "Evidence, Miracles and the Existence of Jesus," *Faith and Philosophy* 28, no. 2 (2011): 129–151.

[160]Craig (RF), pp. 359–360.

[161]Ibid., pp. 361, 377, 387. This is made all the more surprising when he admits on p. 365 that, "no one actually saw Jesus rise from the dead".

[162]See James G. Crossley, "Against the Historical Plausibility of the Empty Tomb Story and the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus: A Response to N.T. Wright," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 3, no. 2 (2005): 171–186. See also Ehrman (HJBG), p. 7, as well as the fourth and fifth chapters. One of the reasons for Ehrman's shift in position here is that the Romans generally allowed crucifixion victims' bodies to be desecrated rather than buried, and he thinks it very implausible that the tyrannical Pilate would have made an exception for Jesus. Another seems to be that the earliest Christian author, Paul, does not ever mention the empty tomb. Ehrman also recognises that it was not the empty tomb that led people to believe in Jesus' resurrection, but the post-resurrection appearances. Indeed, the Gospels explain that the empty tomb led to confusion, while Jesus' appearances were more convincing. For example, see Luke 24 and John 20. Craig is also aware that the Jesus Seminar concluded that Jesus' "corpse was probably thrown into a shallow dirt grave where it rotted away or was eaten by wild dogs". See William Lane Craig, "Rediscovering the Historical Jesus: Presuppositions and Pretensions of the Jesus Seminar," *Faith and Mission* 15, no. 2 (1998): 3–4.

[163]The late New Testament scholar and Anglican priest Barnabas Lindars argued that "there are equally good grounds for maintaining that the empty tomb is a late element in the history of the Gospel traditions". See Barnabas Lindars, "Jesus Risen: Bodily Resurrection But No Empty Tomb," *Theology* 89, no. 728 (1986): 90. Interestingly, while Craig argues from the empty tomb to the resurrection, on page 95 Lindars claims that, "the story of the empty tomb arose as a consequence of the gospel of the resurrection".

the earlier Pauline sources.[164] But one example of Craig's naïveté is his acceptance of Matthew 28:11–15, which he admits is often dismissed "as an apologetic legend", which accuses 'the Jews' of fabricating and disseminating the stolen body hypothesis.[165]

He provides no external Jewish or Pagan sources for his claim that even if the passage is a "Christian apologetic creation", "the fact which cannot be denied is that the story was aimed at a widespread Jewish allegation that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body". With no external sources to refer to, Craig surprisingly claims that, "the Jewish polemic itself shows that the tomb was empty. This is historical evidence of the highest quality, since it comes not from the Christians but from the very enemies of the early Christian faith."[166] It is as if Craig has forgotten where this claim came from: the Gospel of Matthew. It is also noteworthy that Craig again seems to minimise the effect of background knowledge and prior probabilities, though these are always relevant in sound probabilistic analyses.[167] Content with his first 'fact', Craig sets about refuting alternative explanations, including the 'Conspiracy Hypothesis', the 'Apparent Death Hypothesis', the 'Wrong Tomb Hypothesis', and the 'Displaced Body Hypothesis'.[168]

Thorough examination of his unconvincing discussion here would be tedious and unnecessary, given his total disregard for the – arguably any – naturalistic alternatives being inherently more plausible, and also for his failing to discuss *all* the alternatives, which would include various total fabrication (such as minimal mythicism) and partial fabrication/exaggeration (which is mainstream among critical scholars) hypotheses. An example of the latter might involve a historical Jesus, but a purely fictional Easter account, as Jesus' death – perhaps by beheading in an undisclosed location – led to disconfirmed expectancy, emotional distress, and cognitive dissonance among his closest followers; this, and factors conducive to

[164]Craig (RF), pp. 361–371. There is an unsavoury comment, on p. 368, concerning "a hypothesis which has blown up in Crossan's face". Note also that the empty tomb is not mentioned in Paul's epistles, though Craig attempts to argue that Paul knew of it, which – since Paul's writings are older – puts the cart before the horse. Furthermore, Mark 16:8 has the women remaining silent about the empty tomb, despite the earlier angelic command to spread the word in v. 7. Perhaps the latter verse is a fabrication attempting to explain why the earlier, i.e., Pauline, traditions lack the empty tomb narrative. Cf. Philipse (GAS), p. 174.

[165]Craig (RF), p. 369.

[166]Ibid., p. 370.

[167]Ibid., p. 370, ft. 53.

[168]Ibid., pp. 371–377.

personal religious experiences as described in §2.7, could have led them to sincerely believe and assert that Jesus did not *really* die.[169] He rises, spiritually, and triumphantly. He lives.

Interestingly, if Craig's hypothesis, and his considered alternatives all prove to be implausible, a broad-minded total fabrication hypothesis might emerge as being very likely. After all, though controversial, mythicism is still naturalistic. It is no stranger to claim that Jesus did not exist at all, than it is to claim that Jesus was divine and/or that God exists. In fact, it is less so. Now, the same criticisms apply to his other facts, and the resulting discussion of how well alternative hypotheses explain these facts.[170] Craig relies on spurious sources, speculative criteria, and unjustified assumptions. He also fails to examine all the reasonable alternatives – as with his philosophical arguments for God – and continues to disregard relevant background information and associated prior probabilities.

Regarding the *post-mortem experiences*, for example, Craig analyses only one naturalistic alternative: Gerd Lüdemann's Hallucination Hypothesis.[171] He also is amazed by the appearance to the "five hundred brethren",[172] though considering its evidentiary value, it may as well read "five hundred thousand brethren". Interestingly, this great number could work against Craig; the more people witnessed Jesus' miraculous return, the more surprising it is that there is a dearth of contemporary – and unbiased – sources mentioning it. In other words, even overlooking the inherent implausibility of the theory, the consequent probabilities do not favour Craig's hypothesis, as the evidence is not so expected on it. Showing more scepticism, Crossan expresses considerable doubt about the alleged "risen apparitions", nullifying Craig's implication about scholarly consensuses about these 'facts'.[173] The unknown intent of the authors is again worth noting, as these post-mortem appearances might be allegorical, or occurred only through hallucinations and visions. A noteworthy precedent of the latter is evident from the story of Jesus' transfiguration. Described like any other event in the Gospels, Jesus eventually calls what his

[169] As mused earlier, this same sort of creative denial may have prompted the evolution of God from merely the god of the Israelites to the god of all, after the catastrophe of the exile in Babylon. See Armstrong (HOG), pp. 24, 52–97. This also partly addresses Craig's claim that Jesus' disciples would not "die for a lie that they themselves had made up". See Craig (RF), p. 213. This situation can be likened to the mass suicides perpetrated by religious groups, such as Heaven's Gate. Consider also Plato's concept of the 'noble lie', in his *Republic*, 3.414e-415c. Perhaps Jesus' followers felt, like Paul in Nikos Kazantzakis' *The Last Temptation of Christ*, that lying about Jesus would benefit humanity. Interestingly, Plato, writing centuries before Jesus' lifetime, also discusses the 'just man' who would be tortured and killed, arguably even crucified, in *Republic*, 2.361c–362a.

[170] Craig (RF), pp. 377–395.

[171] Ibid., pp. 384–387.

[172] Ibid., pp. 378–379.

[173] See John Dominic Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus?: Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), p. 209. Crossan also thinks that the empty tomb story "was most likely created by Mark himself" (pp. 184–185, 209).

followers witnessed, a vision (*horama*).[174] The same Greek word is used in the context of Luke's empty tomb account.[175] If it is plausible that Craig's first two facts are explained by 'mere' visionary experiences, and it is, then Craig's third fact is clearly not unexpected.

Regarding the *origin of the Christian faith*, Craig fails to consider numerous plausible alternatives, such as minimal mythicism, and too-easily dismisses the notion that the pagan myths of "dying and rising gods" had any influence on the Jesus story by noting the differences.[176] This is almost akin to denying the obvious influence of Greek mythology on Roman mythology because the names of the gods are different. He shows no awareness of syncretistic theory and gives no serious consideration to *religionsgeschichtliche*. The religions are supposed to diverge, largely due to the differing cultures; if they did not, they would not be different religions. He also overlooks the fact that ancient Jews and early Christians were surrounded and most probably influenced by Pagan cultures,[177] that early and contemporary Christian scholars have accepted such parallels,[178] and that there existed numerous disparate Jewish and Christian sects; normative views on first-century Judaism and Christianity are presuppositionalist and untenable.[179]

Indeed, a thorough awareness of his own Bible would have led Craig to understand that several books of the New Testament explicitly attack alternative Christian concepts, such as Docetism and/or Gnosticism.[180] In fact, forms of 'heretical' Christianity like Marcionism were dominant – and 'original' – at certain times

[174]Matthew 17:9.

[175]Luke 24:23. Visions are also found throughout Acts and the Epistles.

[176]Craig (RF), pp. 390–391.

[177]Greenspahn notes that "it would be very surprising" if syncretism did not occur in ancient Israel, "especially in a culture that existed in close proximity with others", before discussing some examples of Israelite and Pagan syncretism. See Frederick E. Greenspahn, "Syncretism and Idolatry in the Bible," *Vetus Testamentum* 54, no. 4 (2004): 492–493. Gnosticism, widely believed to have been influenced by Hellenistic culture, may have influenced early Christianity. See Luther H. Martin, "Why Cecropian Minerva?: Hellenistic Religious Syncretism as System," *Numen* 30, no. 2 (1983): 140 and Charles W. Hedrick and Robert Hodgson, eds., *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005).

[178]For example, see Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 5, 21, 54; Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 69; Tertullian, *Prescription Against Heretics* 40; Charles H. Talbert, *What Is a Gospel?: The Genre of the Canonical Gospels* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985), pp. 27–28.

[179]On the diversity of Jewish religions, see John Kenneth Riches, *The World of Jesus: First-Century Judaism in Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Matthew 16:1. On the diversity of early Christianity, see Ehrman (LC). The New Testament makes clear that greatly differing interpretations of Jesus were already in existence. See 2 Corinthians 11:3–4 and 2 John 1:7.

[180]See 1 John. Such views involve a very different Jesus, such as one that was not fleshly, but only appeared to be so. If such views were upheld, belief in a non-earthly 'Celestial Jesus' does not seem so implausible, particularly when there were some pre-Christian Jews that already believed in a celestial Messiah.

and places.[181] Furthermore, that the Christian religion began and that early Christians claimed to have such experiences does not necessitate such claims being true, despite Craig's bold and unsubstantiated claim that "The origin of the Christian faith is therefore inexplicable unless Jesus really rose from the dead".[182] But Jesus' resurrection is not necessary to explain the rise of Christianity, only the belief in it is, and even that is contentious. By contrast, retrospectively, it is effectively necessarily true that Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon. Had he not done so, he would not have conquered Italy and shaped Europe for centuries to come.[183] Note also that numerous religions emerged before and since the Easter events, all making claims that Craig does not find convincing, and many leading to adherents being prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice in the name of their faith.[184] Unfortunately, only beliefs are required for adherents to kill and be killed, not 'true beliefs'. Additionally, the rise of such religions may be a perfectly *natural* occurrence, contributing to the development of civilisation.[185]

Note also that positing the veridicality of the resurrection account as the only reasonable explanation for people's belief in the resurrection would seem to overlook that the very same Gospels demonstrate that people believed in a resurrection that did not occur: John the Baptist's.[186] Apparently, the confusion was caused by Jesus' being a similar figure to his deceased – though still esteemed – cousin. If the relatively educated and presumably well-advised King Herod Antipas could believe as such, being the one who removed John's head from his body in the first place, it is easy to imagine that the uncritical, ignorant, and superstitious populace would be even more easily swayed. This also leaves open the possibility that the appearance of a look-alike, imposter, or similar religious preacher *naturally* led people to believe that Jesus had risen, soon after his own death. This is made even more probable considering the commonality of the name, Jesus (Joshua). It may be more of a miracle for a distressed Jesus-follower to *not* believe that an emerging religious preacher who looked like Jesus and shared his name, was 'her' Jesus, raised from the dead.

The following hypothesis is not one I espouse, but is an example of a naturalistic hypothesis that is preferable to Craig's, even if it does seem far-fetched. Combining several of the counterpoints and alternative theories mentioned above, and contrasting hypotheses indicating a Pauline or Markan origin of Christianity, I

[181] See, for example, Ehrman (LC), p. 109.

[182] Craig (RF), p. 395.

[183] Craig seems to struggle with this concept, as his discussion of the "*Principle of Sufficient Cause*", focussed on Alexander the Great, makes clear. See William Lane Craig. "Stephen Law on the Non-existence of Jesus of Nazareth," accessed 25/02/2016, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/stephen-law-on-the-non-existence-of-jesus-of-nazareth.

[184] For but one example, see Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers: Allah's New Martyrs* (London: Pluto, 2005).

[185] I mention this to contrast earlier discussion about religion being caused by civilisation. See Norenzayan (BG).

[186] Mark 6:14–16, Matthew 14:1–2, Luke 9:7–8.

now present my Magdalena Hypothesis, which is unrelated to fanciful conspiracies involving Leonardo da Vinci:[187] The schizophrenic Mary Magdalene was extremely distressed at the passing of her spiritual leader, close friend, and possibly, lover.[188] Jesus may have been crucified by the Romans, or unceremoniously suffered from a bout of food poisoning, leading to his death. Being one of the very few to witness the death and burial of a supposedly insignificant Jewish rebel, Mary had every opportunity to influence the rise of one of the world's great faiths. In her sorrows and confusion, she intended to visit Jesus' tomb, but instead arrived at another tomb; an empty tomb (alternatively, had Jesus been thrown into a mass grave for common criminals, Mary might have simply been unable to find his body). Filled with hope, she wondered if Jesus had risen. Soon after, she experienced a comforting hallucination of Jesus, or even just a vivid dream, 'confirming' his return.[189]

Expectedly, she passionately and adamantly shared the good news concerning Jesus' missing body and his encore appearances with her fellow cult members. Most may have scoffed,[190] though a few others, in denial over Jesus' failure, were all too happy to accept this story of Jesus' eventual spiritual victory, a spiritual victory that happened to be quite necessary, given the inaccessibility of the Temple for many Jews of the time and the might of the Romans. While some might have displayed a healthy scepticism regarding the incoherent ramblings of a distressed and mentally ill woman, others would not have felt the need – or had the ability – to confirm the veridicality of her claims, or to subject Mary to thorough psychological evaluation. Elated followers would then embark on an intense campaign of proselytism. It appears that a distraught and possibly mentally unwell Mary Magdalene, if not an entirely fictional character, is all the explanation required to account for traditions regarding Jesus' death and burial, his missing body, the post-mortem appearances, and the origin of the belief in his resurrection. With some – and possibly more dignifying (e.g., an elaborate tomb rather than a common mass grave, and an execution rather than an accidental or illness-related death) – elaborations by anonymous followers uninterested in presenting sober and critical accounts, being more interested in collaborative storytelling, the Gospels eventuate.[191]

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[187]For biblical and other references, see the subsection on the criteria, above. For a far more fantastic hypothesis, see Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (London: Bantam, 2003).

[188]On Mary and Jesus' close relationship, see the *Gospel of Mary* and the *Gospel of Philip*. On Mary's possible mental instability, consider her fervent devotion to a cult leader accused of blasphemy and sedition, and her allegedly being 'possessed'. See Mark 2:6–7, 15:16–20, 16:9, Luke 8:2.

[189]There are numerous possible explanations for Mary's believing that she had seen Jesus, many of which were touched on in §2.7. Of particular interest is that altered states of consciousness and optical illusions can explain why what is visually perceived sometimes differs from objective reality.

[190]Mark 16:9–11 and Luke 24:9–11 have some of Jesus' other followers doubting Mary's claims. They may have thought that she was simply mistaken, or even lying. Perhaps she was. Though taking the confessional position, Matthew 27:64 and 28:13 leave open the possibility that various stakeholders were being deceptive.

[191]Cf. Philipse (GAS), pp. 178–182.

Needless to say, the Magdalena Hypothesis should be rejected – though it is more plausible than Craig's – due to scepticism over the sources, the primacy of Paul's writings, and doubts as to the very existence of figures like Mary Magdalene. Nevertheless, this theory does fit the evidence well, and, making no appeal to the supernatural, benefits from a vastly higher prior probability. The same can be said for other alternative hypotheses, such as that Jesus did not die that day; naturalistic hypotheses are simply superior to Craig's.[192] Now chronicling every error of fact and logic in the increasingly unreasonable *Reasonable Faith* would necessitate further volumes, so the analysis shall proceed to the more relevant issue of how Craig scrutinises his own hypothesis. Craig tests his hypothesis, "God raised Jesus from the dead", with McCullagh's aforementioned criteria.[193] (This is despite the fact that McCullagh, who is also a Christian, does not find the resurrection theory to be particularly historically plausible.)[194] He judges the first criterion (*the hypothesis must imply further statements describing present, observable data*) fulfilled, referring to the very existence of the Christian faith and the associated historical texts. Craig is eager to claim that the hypothesis also passes the second criterion (*the hypothesis must have greater explanatory scope than rival hypotheses*), but that is unjustified on account of his failing to analyse all reasonable alternative explanations.

The aforementioned hypothesis of minimal mythicism, for example, could explain more facts, particularly with regards to Paul's relative silence over an Earthly Jesus that was recently in Jerusalem. Despite Craig's claims to the contrary, his hypothesis also fails the related third criterion (*the hypothesis must have greater explanatory power than rival hypotheses*), as the available data is better explained by alternative hypotheses. One additional concern here is that not only is the evidence so poor, but Craig must contend with the implausibility that God would be happy to furnish us with such poor evidence, that happens to look like something that arises naturalistically, which serves to 'aid' us in making vital decisions. Craig predictably claims success with the fourth criterion (*the hypothesis must be more plausible than rival hypotheses*), which is fallacious for obvious reasons. His philosophical arguments for God's existence failed, and miraculous claims overwhelmingly tend to be ahistorical. In contrast, fabrication – whether partial or total – is very probable.

Regarding the fifth criterion (*the hypothesis must be less ad hoc than rival hypotheses*), Craig is again hopeful, not realising that his invention of a single,

[192]Eisenberg discusses such a scenario and, while admitting that it is improbable, agrees that it is still more probable than the supernaturalistic explanation. See Leonard Irwin Eisenberg, "A New Natural Interpretation of the Empty Tomb," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 80, no. 2 (2016): 133–143. Note that other religious believers, such as certain Muslims and Gnostics, also believed that Jesus did not die on the cross that day. See Quran 4:157, and *Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, which seemingly has Jesus laughing as the innocent Simon of Cyrene suffers in his place.

[193]Craig (RF), pp. 397–399.

[194]Christopher Behan McCullagh, "The Resurrection of Jesus: Explanation or Interpretation?," *Southeastern Theological Review* 3, no. 1 (2012): 41–53.

personal, necessary, uncaused, free, beginningless, changeless, transcendent, immaterial, timeless, spaceless, all-good, all-knowing, all-powerful, universe-creating being, that is unhealthily obsessed with us mere mortals and what we get up to in the bedroom, and can perform acts that overturn current scientific understandings of how the world functions, in order to explain some dubious claims found in anonymous, didactic, biased, fallacious, unreferenced, derivative, contradictory, misinterpreted, mistranslated, and legend-filled non-contemporaneous documents, that have been tampered with by several different religious groups, is possibly the maximally-greatest ad hoc explanation of all-time.[195]

Concerning the sixth criterion (*the hypothesis must be disconfirmed by fewer accepted beliefs than rival hypotheses*), Craig is again overly hasty in claiming victory, given that miraculous claims are very rarely true, even if it is granted that God exists and that miracles can and do occur. Craig expectedly affirms triumph as regards the summarising seventh criterion (*the hypothesis must so exceed its rivals in fulfilling conditions (2)–(6) that there is little chance of a rival hypothesis exceeding it in meeting these conditions*). This claim is fallacious due to his exceedingly implausible hypothesis, and the existence of more plausible alternative explanations that also – and to a better extent – explain the available evidence. Since none of Craig's claims necessitate altering the probability estimates teased earlier in this subsection, my calculation may proceed. Note that the low prior probability is incontestable,[196] justified by one or more of the following: scientific knowledge regarding miracles, historical frequencies concerning verified miraculous claims, the failure of the philosophical arguments for some god's existence, the great difficulty in demonstrating that god would intervene and in also identifying this god; though for this calculation, only the historical frequencies have been considered. The consequent probabilities – also known as likelihoods – already favor Craig's view, for no other reason than charity and to argue *a fortiori*. The simplified calculation, using Bayes' Theorem[197]:

$$P(h|e.b) = \frac{P(h|b) \times P(e|h.b)}{[P(h|b) \times P(e|h.b)] + [P(\tilde{}h|b) \times P(e|\tilde{}h.b)]}$$

$$P(h|e.b) = \frac{0.01 \times 0.67}{[0.01 \times 0.67] + [0.99 \times 0.33]}$$

[195]Craig judges Ehrman's example "that the make-believe god Zulu sent Jesus into the twelfth dimension" as being ad hoc. See Craig (RF), p. 398. Interestingly, Craig attributes far more goodness, knowledge, and power to his god than what is necessary to raise Jesus from the dead, so that the 'Zulu' explanation may indeed be *less* ad hoc than Craig's.

[196]Except by sceptics who might – rightly – wish to see a far lower prior probability assigned to the hypothesis of Jesus' resurrection. 1% is far too generous.

[197]Note that 0.67 and 0.33 could be substituted for 1 and 0.5, respectively, which would make no difference to the calculations.

$$P(h|e.b) = 0.02$$

Being extremely generous to Craig's theory regarding both the prior and consequent probabilities leads to a 2% probability of his theory being true, based on the available evidence. This means that there is a 98% chance that Craig's resurrection hypothesis is wrong. And this is being *very* generous. And not a word was said of such claims being impossible. Nor was the lack of evidence for a god or gods appealed to. Nor was the problem of this god's identity referred to, though it will be in the following section. Contra Hume, if his critics are even interpreting his writings correctly, I am willing to accept that the evidence, if sufficiently compelling, can overcome the extraordinarily low prior probability for this extraordinary claim. It just so happens, that the evidence is not extraordinary; it is, in fact, very poor, and is expected on non-resurrection hypotheses.[198] Interestingly, if this calculation is erroneous, Craig has still not succeeded. Even if we accept that God's existence makes Jesus' resurrection more probable, Craig does not explain by how much. Perhaps the posterior probability of Craig's hypothesis would be raised from nearly 0% to, say, 10%.

4.3 The "So What?" Factor

The argument having already multiply failed, Craig is somehow confident in assuming that the being that raised Jesus from the dead is indeed the god of theism, and has originally been revealed to humanity through the Jewish tradition. He further feels that his argument justifies an exclusivist viewpoint: the way to salvation is only through the Christian faith.[199] Craig's important and Yahweh-centred third premise is actually highly problematic, like the misattribution of lighting as Thor's work, or confusing schizophrenia for demonic possession.[200] Firstly, Jesus could have risen naturally, by some unknown biological mechanism; after all, we do not yet have a complete understanding of the laws of nature. This may become known in future, so that it is currently a mere epistemological miracle, and not an incident of God's intervention. Assuming the latter merely begs the question. And Craig is not being generous to sceptics, but is trying to open up a sure path to an ontological miracle,

[198] Interestingly, church father Origen inadvertently admitted that the evidence for Jesus' miracles is very poor, with only the Gospels as sources. See Origen, *Contra Celsum* 2.33.

[199] Craig (RF), pp. 277–278; Craig (OG), pp. 282–283.

[200] Being naturalistic in nature, it is arguable that even – absurdly – supposing that the 'chariot of fire' that took Elijah to 'Heaven' in 2 Kings 2 was really referring to a flying saucer is preferable to the sort of supernaturalistic reasoning Craig opts for. For some examples of such theorising, see Erich von Däniken, *Chariots of the Gods* (New York: Berkley Books, 1984), p. 58; Zecharia Sitchin, *The Earth Chronicles Expeditions* (Rochester, VT: Bear & Company, 2007), pp. 108–109. Also recall author Arthur C. Clarke's third law, that any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.

his preferred divine explanation. Craig asserts that a natural resurrection is not possible, but offers no conclusive evidence, effectively rendering his argument an appeal to ignorance.[201]

Invoking God to explain a historical miraculous claim is quite novel, as it effectively empirically inoculates the investigation.[202] It is akin to acknowledging that Jack could not have grown his extraordinarily large beanstalk from regular beans, then asserting that the claim is that he actually used magic beans.[203] This is similar to the earlier-discussed 'shifting the divine implausibility' and implicitly admits the validity of using Bayesian probabilistic reasoning here. It is also like claiming that there is nothing implausible about the resurrection of Asclepius, so long as Zeus exists. Or like claiming that there's nothing implausible about my arriving at my office by way of traversing instantaneously through various physical and nonphysical dimensions by way of supernatural transportation technology, to submit this almost-late manuscript on time, if Satan gave me such technology. Indeed, the latter example seems very consistent with the data, since Satan is very cynical, and I am seeking to undermine his eternal enemy. As is often the case, God, like a Joker card, is appealed to as an easy – and incredibly versatile – explanation. We can say that anything is plausible 'if God did it', which nullifies proper probabilistic reasoning, including the ability to differentiate between competing supernatural claims, and renders the whole endeavour question begging and/or circular.

Now Jesus may have risen naturally, through the intervention of some sympathetic and non-divine alien – or even more local – being,[204] arguably a more plausible theory as no appeal to an incorporeal entity is necessary. Jesus might also have possessed a rare – or even unique – mutated gene, which gives rise to resurrections or apparent resurrections, with this gene eventually dying with him.[205] In other words, the hypothesis that Jesus was resurrected fails to answer the 'so what?' question, concerning God's existence. Furthermore, the Gospels make clear that many believed in Jesus before the resurrection, so that that event is not truly necessary for Christian belief. A pointed example is the Roman centurion present at

[201] Craig (RF), pp. 24, 268, 275.

[202] Swinburne effectively concurs with this approach, though does admit that what seems naturally impossible could be naturally possible after all. See Swinburne (EG), pp. 277–279.

[203] Iona Opie and Peter Opie, *The Classic Fairy Tales* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 215, 218.

[204] Such as T'Klaar, a gifted medic in the Noumenalian Space Fleet. Indeed, some believe that historical claims of gods actually refer to such 'ancient astronauts', and yet others believe that highly advanced people lived in humanity's distant past. See Michael Carroll, "Of Atlantis and Ancient Astronauts: A Structural Study of Two Modern Myths," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 11, no. 3 (1977): 541–550.

[205] Such a gene might even disappear and then reappear at opportune times in history (to benefit the Buddha, for example), such as the *IRGM* gene. See the appropriately named article, Cemalettin Bekpen et al., "Death and Resurrection of the Human *IRGM* Gene," *PLOS Genetics* 5, no. 3 (2009): 1–8.

Jesus' *death*, who came to believe that "this man was the Son of God!"[206] The earlier discussed Celestial Jesus theory also shows how it is possible to accept the basic premises of Christianity without believing in the traditional Gospel story, which includes the physical and earthly resurrection.[207] Secondly, (3) relies on the existence of some god (or gods), whose existence has not actually been established by Craig, rendering the argument question begging.

A third problem relates to the specific god-concept that obtains, meaning that Craig's argument is again question begging and/or circular; those disposed to accept Jesus' resurrection might yet favour alternative god models. For example, in a (pantheistic) world where all are divine, Jesus may have been one of the few enlightened individuals who were able to tap into their dormant powers, raising himself from death. Despite being associated with monotheism, Jesus may have hinted at pantheism, supposedly claiming that the "kingdom of God" is within.[208] Paul of Tarsus may also have espoused a pantheistic view, boldly declaring that "Christ is all, and is in all".[209] Polytheism is also possible; perhaps Loki raised Jesus, on a whim. And note that some who witnessed the miracles of Paul and Barnabas in Acts attributed the great works to Zeus and Hermes.[210] They might have been right. Of course, a sub-maximal monotheistic god could also have raised Jesus. It does seem counter-productive that a maximal god that wants people to know Jesus was raised did the deed in secret; she surely could have resurrected Jesus in full view of lay people, historians, and government officials. Fourthly, if the theistic God's existence is assumed, the numerous problems concerning revelation (as pertains our species and approximate timeline) and God's alleged intent to necromantically succour Jesus also apply, as indicated in §3.6. Maybe God does exist, and is not interested in raising Jesus, or anybody else, from death.

Fifthly, (3) is again not necessitated, in that it could have been another god of the Judeo-Christian tradition, such as the Demiurge, that raised Jesus. It could also have been Satan, Baal, or some other Yahwistic rival, meaning that the Jews were right in supposedly considering Jesus to be a false prophet,[211] invalidating Craig's claim that the resurrection "is the divine vindication of Jesus' radical personal claims".[212] The Bible itself reveals the power of Yahweh's divine rivals, as indicated by Moses and Aaron miraculously transforming a staff into a snake, which is a feat repeated by the

[206] Mark 15:39, Matthew 27:54.

[207] We could also consider various forms of liberal Christianity. It is even possible that the earliest Christians did not take the resurrection accounts literally. See Miller (RREC). This view suits proponents of the Celestial Jesus theory, who often consider Mark as an allegorisation of Paul's writings.

[208] Luke 17:20–21.

[209] Colossians 3:11.

[210] Acts 14. These believers also thought that Paul and Barnabas were these gods, in human form.

[211] According to Judeo-Christian tradition, even the false gods and/or heretical sorcerers could perform miracles. See Exodus 7:8–13.

[212] Craig (RF), p. 399.

Pagan Pharaoh's magicians.[213] These problems reveal that Craig's argument is circular, as it was supposed to demonstrate, and not simply assert, that – once theism had been proven – God has specifically been revealed as the Judeo-Christian Yahweh.[214] Scholars must consider that when appealing to the supernatural, which effectively entails unknown prior probabilities, there are actually infinitely many possible explanations to consider, and that identifying the most probable one is in effect impossible, at least presently. It is also worth noting that there were different Judaisms and Christianities in the first and second centuries, which even the New Testament makes clear.[215] This makes ascertaining 'the exclusive truth' even more challenging, which leads to a sixth point.

There is the possibility that this miraculous claim is party or wholly genuine, along with the claims of other religions, so that Craig's particularist view is not justified. This last point is supported in part by the outlook of Pinchas Lapide, making Craig's positive reference to him counter-intuitive.[216] This Jewish theologian's failure to convert to Christianity despite accepting that Jesus was resurrected should have alerted Craig to the hasty conclusions he draws from his argument.[217] And that Jesus may have been one of many resurrected people seems to be a concept known to Craig's conservative colleague, Gary Habermas, who commented that "Others, like [the Hindu guru] Yogananda, conclude that there have been numerous spiritual masters in the world religions who have been raised. Interestingly, Yogananda illustrates this statement by referring to the resurrection of Jesus".[218] Clearly, Jesus' resurrection is not sufficient to proclaim the exclusivist truth of Christian theism. It may be that further Christian claims, like that of exclusivism, are distortions of Jesus' original teachings.[219] Furthermore, when narrowing the

[213]Exodus 7:10–11. See also Matthew 24:24 and 2 Thessalonians 2:9.

[214]Also, it does not follow that if Jesus was raised, that every claim made by or about Jesus is true.

[215]For example, see the warnings about 'false prophets' in Mark 13:6, 22, Galatians 1:6–10, 2 Peter 2, and 1 John 4:1. In an 'inversion' of Mark 13, perhaps Jesus was himself a false prophet, who drew attention away from 'the true Messiah'.

[216]Craig (RF), p. 349; Craig (OG), p. 219.

[217]For more on Lapide's unique view, which predictably relies on the assumption of the Gospels' general reliability, see Pinchas Lapide, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1983).

[218]Gary R. Habermas, "Resurrection Claims in Non-Christian Religions," *Religious Studies* 25, no. 2 (1989): 170. He goes on to downplay the evidence for similar non-Christian claims, despite the fact that all such claims are implausible and some of these claims are better supported, such as that of Sri Yukteswar. Yukteswar's disciple Paramhansa Yogananda was an eyewitness, and published on Yukteswar's post-death appearances only a few years after Yukteswar's death. Also, Philostratus shows *criticism* with *named sources* regarding Apollonius, which is something totally unfamiliar to Paul and the Gospel authors. On non-Christian resurrection claims, Habermas inconsistently – as a conservative Christian – concludes that, "Simply to report a miracle is not sufficient to establish it, especially if that miracle is then going to be used to support a religious system" (177).

[219]After all, we do know that there were many doctrinal battles as mainstream Christianity took form. For example, see Ehrman (OCS, 2nd edn).

calculation to consider the premise, 'the god of theism tortured, killed, and raised the innocent Jesus as an act of atonement and salvation', there would seemingly be inconsistencies (i.e., improbabilities) with the need for an omni-god to resort to such actions, as if blood magic were the only way for such a god to save those who he has – ultimately – condemned;[220] such primitive beliefs are easily explainable on alternative supernaturalisms and on naturalism, given background knowledge about religious syncretism and the religious beliefs of the people interacting with the ancient Israelites.[221]

Craig's Christological argument is unsalvageable, both as an argument to God and an argument from God, despite his appeals to secular authorities, at least concerning the first premise. Expectedly, Craig cannot find many secular scholars who agree with him about the truth of the second premise, but significantly, there are several Christian scholars who disagree, despite their personal beliefs. Being fond of quoting atheistic scholars to give the perception of reduced bias and to reinforce his points, Craig would do well to mimic his fellow Christian colleagues in acknowledging that Jesus' resurrection cannot be proven historically. Dale Allison, for example, notes that numerous naturalistic alternatives are plausible, and recognises that historians differ in their assumptions.[222] Dale Martin openly acknowledges that Jesus' resurrection cannot be established historically.[223] Being someone who understands what religion is, as a scholar of Religious Studies, Martin realises that not all forms of Christianity need rely on objective truths:

> For modern Christians to say that modern historical criticism is necessary for the Christian interpretation of the Bible is to say that all premodern Christians or those Christians throughout the world today who do not use historical criticism did not and are not reading Scripture Christianly, and that offends the theological notion and the confession of faith in the communion of saints. To insist that historical criticism is indispensable for interpreting the Bible in a Christian manner is modernist imperialism.[224]

[220]This also alludes to a contradiction. While New Testament passages such as Romans 4:25, 1 Corinthians 15:3, 1 Peter 3:18, and 1 John 2:2 proclaim that Jesus died for our sins, earlier passages from the Tanakh, like Deuteronomy 24:16, Psalm 49:7, Jeremiah 31:30, Ezekiel 18, affectively assert that no one should suffer for the sins of another. The contradictions continue, with other Jewish verses asserting Yahweh's penchant for generational curses. See, for example, Exodus 20:5, Numbers 14:18, and Deuteronomy 5:9.

[221]For a useful list of parallels between the books of the Tanakh and various Pagan – and older – sources such as the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the *Enûma Eliš*, the *Great Hymn to the Aten*, the *Code of Hammurabi*, the *Baal Cycle*, the *Epic of Aqhat*, and the *Instruction of Amenemope*, see Jaco Gericke, "Does Yahweh exist? A philosophical-critical reconstruction of the case against realism in Old Testament Theology" (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria, 2003), pp. 203–225.

[222]Dale C. Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and its Interpreters* (London: T & T Clark, 2005).

[223]Michael Licona and Dale B. Martin, *Did Jesus Rise Physically From the Dead?* (Arva, ON: The Navigators, 2012), Video recording.

[224]Dale B. Martin, *Pedagogy of the Bible: An Analysis and Proposal*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), p. 44.

In my public debate with historian Chris Forbes (Macquarie University), the committed Christian admitted that miracles cannot be proven.[225] Similarly, a sessional lecturer on the Historical Jesus at The University of Sydney, John Dickson, freely acknowledged to me the limitations that the historical method places on claims about Jesus:

> I accept that there is a large gap between the historical Jesus and the theological Jesus. . . Do I think miracles are inherently unlikely? Yes, because they are inherently rare.[226]

> Hence, while the historian can confidently say that Jesus probably did things that people thought were healings, she cannot say whether Jesus actually healed anyone. Again, while the historian can reasonably confidently affirm that there was an empty tomb known to have been Jesus', and, further, that people claimed to have seen him alive again, he cannot affirm that Jesus in fact rose again. . . methods and data cannot secure that portrait without going beyond the agreed rules of historical enquiry.[227]

Concerning the resurrection of Jesus, influential theologian and philosopher of history Ernst Troeltsch, an endorser of the principle of analogy, asserted that "Historical research has nothing to say".[228] Nevertheless, other Christian academics agree that the resurrection can be reasonably argued for, and some of these efforts will be examined in the following subsection, in order to determine if Craig's colleagues could improve his argument.

4.3.1 Alternative Christological Arguments

Like Craig, apologists Gary Habermas and Michael Licona use the same questionable sources in arguing for Jesus' resurrection, appeal to numerous sources that are not extant, and fail to judge all competing hypotheses.[229] In a later effort, Licona acknowledges that he "weighed a limited number of naturalistic explanations", and continues his use of dubious and hypothetical sources.[230] Using the same discredited sources, N. T. Wright also argues for the resurrection by inference to the best

[225]Raphael Lataster et al., *Does the Bible Present the Real Jesus?* (Sydney: Resolved Church Sydney, 2012), Audio recording.

[226]John Dickson, personal communication, October 17, 2013.

[227]John Dickson, personal communication, July 4, 2014. Dickson has made similar comments in his lectures on the Historical Jesus at The University of Sydney, some of which I attended, as an auditing student.

[228]Ernst Troeltsch, *The Christian Faith*, trans. Garrett E. Paul (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1991), p. 96.

[229]Gary R. Habermas and Michael Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2004), pp. 206–214.

[230]Michael Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), pp. 610–618.

explanation, failing to adequately incorporate the relevant background knowledge.[231] Keeping in line with the sort of transparent methodologies espoused in this book, Lydia McGrew and Timothy McGrew attempt to employ Bayes' Theorem in arguing for Jesus' resurrection. Unfortunately, the theorem was not employed in a way so as to soundly argue that Jesus' resurrection is the *most probable* explanation of the evidence.

For one, the McGrews acknowledge that they do not "examine other evidence bearing on the existence of God", whilst recognising that such evidence "is indirectly relevant to the occurrence of the resurrection".[232] While this fact alone largely interdicts a compelling argument for the resurrection, they also confess that much of their work is "predicated on the assumption that in matters other than the explicit claims of miracles, the Gospels and the book of Acts are generally reliable".[233] This displays the same 'bracketing method' utilised by Craig, and permits critical scholars to wonder why complex arguments for such miraculous claims would be necessary if the associated texts are assumed to be so trustworthy; perhaps the miraculous claims could be accepted immediately, given the assumed reliability of the sources, so that such bracketing and opaque reasoning would be excessive. I also see no proper treatment therein regarding the fact that the lack of evidence can be utilised as convincing evidence in a Bayesian analysis. Further critique would be redundant for such an incomplete argument, so attention shall now be turned to Swinburne's Bayesian case.

In *The Resurrection of God Incarnate*, the respected and influential Richard Swinburne uses a Bayesian approach to argue for the resurrection hypothesis, in a more formalised and sophisticated fashion. He begins questionably, by refusing to "consider whether or not generally available public evidence (not directly concerned with the Christian tradition) favours the claim that there is a God of the traditional kind", simply because he has "written a lot about the force of this evidence in other books".[234] This is unfortunate, for even he realises that if "the evidence is against the claim that there is such a God, then the occurrence of such an event as the Resurrection is improbable".[235] Furthermore, Swinburne reveals his faith in what are highly questionable sources: "as apparent testimony must be read as real testimony, so real testimony must be believed, in the absence of counter-evidence".[236] And like so many apologists, Swinburne cannot avoid the temptation to refer to hypothetical sources.[237]

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[231]Nicholas Thomas Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2003), pp. 716–717.

[232]Timothy McGrew and Lydia McGrew, "The Argument from Miracles: A Cumulative Case for the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. Craig and Moreland (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 595.

[233]Ibid., p. 630.

[234]Swinburne (RGI), p. 2. That this is assumed to be the God of theism is made more evident on p. 201.

[235]Ibid., p. 2.

[236]Ibid., p. 76.

[237]Ibid., p. 82.

Additionally, his calculation can hardly be called Bayesian when not all alternative hypotheses have been considered, such as minimal mythicism, or my fanciful Magdalena Hypothesis.[238] To his credit, Swinburne acknowledges that it is "not possible to investigate whether Jesus rose from the dead without taking a view about how probable it is that there is a God likely to intervene in human history in this kind of way".[239] It seems that sophisticated apologists arguing for the resurrection at least 'admit' that they assume God's existence, as resurrections seemingly cannot happen naturally. This is not necessarily a positive or justified point, hence my use of inverted commas. This may be an underhanded tactic to rule out unknown naturalistic causes, effectively leaving them appealing to ignorance. For example, if applying Ockham's Razor – as beloved by the same apologists in defending theism's plausibility relative to alternatives – to Jesus' resurrection, positing an extremely powerful supernatural being is to do far more than is required; positing a far more benign extra-terrestrial (Lord Xenu of the Church of Scientology theology, perhaps)[240] equipped with advanced medical technology can be considered more reasonable.[241] Or perhaps Jesus possessed a special genetic mutation that allowed him to resurrect naturally. And please note that the Jews of the era already believed in magical feats, including resurrections, wrought by humans.[242]

Swinburne eventually proceeds with his Bayesian calculation. He suggests that the probability that the theistic God exists, on the background evidence of natural theology, is "the modest value of ½".[243] As elucidated earlier, my relatively accommodating estimation would be far less than 1/*gods number*, which effectively entails that all of Swinburne's subsequent figures are wrong.[244] The Christian apologist might cry foul, but such is the peril in entangling Jesus' resurrection with God's

[238]For the few alternative theories he does consider, see ibid., pp. 174–186.

[239]Ibid., pp. 202–203.

[240]Lord Xenu is not just an alleged alien, but is also a very important figure in a rival religion. See Mikael Rothstein, "'His name was Xenu. He used renegades...': Aspects of Scientology's Founding Myth," in *Scientology*, ed. James R. Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 365–388.

[241]Appealing to such seemingly unreasonable alternatives, even if naturalistic, seems problematic and unfair, though, admittedly, such a figure could well be worshiped and feared as a god. While a time-travelling wizard from the future, or some such outlandish figure, may be more plausible than a maximally great god, it is certainly preferable to note the possibility of vastly more probable naturalistic explanations, such as mere exaggeration. With this in mind, this argument against 'miraculous' or 'supernatural' or 'religious' claims, is really just an argument against outlandish claims. Also note that seemingly improbable events happen quite frequently, with no need to resort to supernatural explanations. For example, many people are born with rare congenital defects, and low-seeded and unseeded tennis players (like Boris Becker, Goran Ivanišević, and Roger Federer) beat high-seeded ones and even win tournaments (like Wimbledon and the Australian Open). Consider also the cases of 'Brexit', Donald Trump's winning the US presidency, and perennial relegation candidate Leicester City's coasting to the 2015–16 English Premier League title.

[242]For some examples, see Acts 8, 9:36–42, 20:9–12, and especially 1 Kings 17:17–24 and 2 Kings 4.

[243]Swinburne (RGI), p. 211.

[244]The *gods number* is described in §3.3.

existence. With Swinburne's overly generous estimate as the cornerstone, a series of now pointless calculations leads to his concluding that "the probability that Jesus was God Incarnate who rose from the dead (*h*), on the evidence both of natural theology (*k*) and of the detailed history of Jesus and of other human prophets (*e*)", "equals something like 0.97".[245] Given the low prior probability for theism, the very low frequency of confirmed miracles, and the state of the sources, Swinburne's calculation is revealed as being farcical.[246]

4.4 Concluding Remarks

The burdens born by Craig's Christological argument were too great, and too numerous. This philosophical and historical argument needed to prove some god's existence, due to the failure of Craig's philosophical case for theism; further demonstrate that this being was the God of theism; and make obvious that God revealed itself exclusively and relatively recently, to human beings of the Jewish persuasion. Finally, this argument was supposed to reveal that Jesus of Nazareth was raised from the dead, by God; and if Historical Jesus agnosticism or mythicism were accepted, the argument would also have to show that Jesus existed historically. In all this, the argument failed. It was an example of bad philosophy and bad history. The first premise relied on so-called facts that were discovered using highly speculative methodologies. These facts were sourced from extremely questionable documents, and even sources that are no longer extant, if they ever existed at all. That the poor state of the evidence for Jesus could reasonably lead to minimalist, agnostic, and even mythicist views, was briefly considered. The sourcing of these rather mundane 'facts' however, paled in comparison to the errors of the second premise.

In asserting that God's raising Jesus from the dead is the best explanation for the facts of the first premise, Craig overlooks the implausibility of miracles and the improbability of the veridicality of miraculous claims, which I have argued for on account of empirical evidence about how the world functions, a very low historical frequency of verified miracles, the fact that miracles carry polemical power just because of their implausibility, and the realisation that believers tend to happily dismiss all other religions' miraculous claims as being concocted. Craig had also failed to provide a convincing enough case for God's existence. In unjustifiably ruling out the possibility that Jesus rose naturally, Craig effectively appeals to

[245] Swinburne (RGI), pp. 211–214.

[246] Swinburne also argues, quite cleverly, that there is *a priori* justification for God becoming incarnate through a figure very much like Jesus. I critique this aspect of his case, and many others, in Raphael Lataster, "On Richard Swinburne and the Failings of Christian Theistic Evidentialism," *Literature & Aesthetics* 26, no. 1 (2016): 23–40.

ignorance. Furthermore, he ruled out numerous naturalistic alternatives that are inherently more plausible, such as various partial fabrication and total fabrication hypotheses, more fanciful hypotheses involving advanced extra-terrestrials, and so forth.

Craig also avoided discussing the infinitely many supernaturalistic alternatives, such as the involvement of a more inclusive god (or gods), that also revealed itself to other cultures. Craig's fellow Christian colleagues, such as Swinburne and Habermas, similarly produced invalid arguments, which were otherwise unsound. Craig, and his colleagues, simply offered nothing here that would convince the uncommitted analyst. Craig's argument also raised other concerns about its overstated significance. For example, a person can reasonably be a Christian without believing in the resurrection, like the centurion present at Jesus' death and the believers who came before him, and a person can reasonably be a non-Christian while believing that the resurrection occurred, like Lapide.

With his philosophical arguments exposed as bad, his case for theism otherwise decimated, his inability to deal with the many and plausible alternatives to theism, and severe doubts raised as to the reliability of the historical – particularly miraculous – claims, Craig's case for Christianity's rationality is moribund. Recent research reveals that Craig's philosophical colleagues, many of whom are fellow theists, collectively find that no argument for God is 'very strong' or even 'strong', with arguments from miracles being the weakest, and that arguments against God's existence are generally more convincing; the highest rated argument being the argument from evil.[247] Nevertheless, what Craig could conjure with his climactic and historical argument was duly considered, and assuredly rejected.

Despite the logical and factual flaws present in each of his arguments, and the numerous deficiencies found in his cases for theism and exclusivist Christian theism, lay audiences consider Craig to be an interesting character. Both believers and non-believers alike find Craig's arguments persuasive, which shall be a major topic of discussion in the following part of this book.

[247]The results also suggest that theists are more likely to view the arguments for God more favourably, and also revealed that theists generally viewed the atheistic argument from evil as reasonably compelling. See Helen De Cruz. "Results of my survey on natural theological arguments," accessed 02/03/2016, http://www.academia.edu/1438058/Results_of_my_survey_on_natural_theological_arguments. Notably, these responses did not account for the many alternative god-concepts that could obtain, nor the variety of possible revelations, so that my efforts in this project further establish the unconvincing nature of the arguments for theism. See also Helen De Cruz, "Cognitive Science of Religion and the Study of Theological Concepts," *Topoi* 33, no. 2 (2014): 487–497.

Chapter 5
Craig in the Sociological Context

Here I shall examine the appeal of William Lane Craig, which ties in with the contemporary sociological phenomenon of some Christians' desire to present a rational justification for their beliefs, via a brief social criticism.[1] This apologetic attitude is contrasted with fideists and presuppositionalists;[2] evidentialists are people who largely believe because they think the evidence suggests that they should. Christian fans of William Lane Craig seem to regard as important that their beliefs can be supported with objective evidence, a position that foregrounds the style of evangelism and apologetics practiced by New Theologians like William Lane Craig and his colleagues. This position diminishes the importance of the traditional faith-based belief in the central tenets of Christianity, and shall herein be described as 'Christian evidentialism'.

Christian evidentialism may be conceived as a movement within mainstream Christianity. While they may also ascribe great importance to the role of faith, many Christian apologists consider putatively objective evidence concerning their religion to be important, either in the formation and maintenance of their own beliefs or/and in their evangelistic pursuits. Lay Christian evidentialists tend to express their admiration for the celebrities within their movement, such as William Lane Craig and Gary Habermas. This part of the book shall employ somewhat of a Durkheimian lens – regarding his notion of sacredness – to examine the values and practices of lay

[1] In lieu of a thorough sociological analysis.

[2] This must be distinguished from the Christian presuppositionalists who also make use of evidence. For example, Ken Ham's *Answers in Genesis* appears to make use of evidence, but overtly relegates it as being of lesser value than faith: "By definition, no apparent, perceived or claimed evidence in any field, including history and chronology, can be valid if it contradicts the scriptural record." See AiG. "Statement of Faith," accessed 02/07/2015, https://answersingenesis.org/about/faith.

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R. Lataster, *The Case Against Theism*, Sophia Studies in Cross-cultural Philosophy of Traditions and Cultures 26, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-90793-2_5

Christian evidentialists,[3] and shall also consider other sociological aspects of William Lane Craig's interactions with the general public.

The contemporary Christian evidentialist movement can be said to comprise several values, as well as certain celebrities and their books, debates, and other public interactions. By highlighting the key features of Christian evidentialism, we can distinguish it from other forms of the Christian faith, as well as other evidentialist groups, such as New Atheists, or secular humanists. In other words, I shall look at how Christian evidentialism can be seen as a religious grouping in itself, perhaps similar to others (like New Atheism), apart from the traditional beliefs and practices associated with mainline Christianity. Much of this research was conducted in the field, namely at several events from Craig's 2013 tour of Australia, held during late July and most of August. Hundreds of people attended each event (such as his debate with philosopher Peter Slezak and his talk at The University of Sydney), with several thousand being attracted to the events held at larger venues, such as Sydney's Town Hall, where Craig debated physicist Lawrence Krauss. Sources of data included my notes taken during these events, print and online media coverage of these events, peripheral documents relevant to these events, and informal on-site discussions conducted with other attendees. Many of my findings are found to be consistent with several forms of religious – and irreligious – evidentialism.

5.1 Christian Evidentialism

The philosophical position I have termed Christian evidentialism is not a new phenomenon. For example, the Roman Catholic Church has long been an opponent of fideism, which places greater importance on faith and revelation rather than reason and evidence, insisting that reason and evidence can be combined to demonstrate the fundamental truths of Christianity. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* makes this very clear:

> "Our holy mother, the Church, holds and teaches that God, the first principle and last end of all things, can be known with certainty from the created world by the natural light of human reason." Without this capacity, man would not be able to welcome God's revelation. Man has this capacity because he is created "in the image of God".
>
> In the historical conditions in which he finds himself, however, man experiences many difficulties in coming to know God by the light of reason alone: Though human reason is, strictly speaking, truly capable by its own natural power and light of attaining to a true and certain knowledge of the one personal God, who watches over and controls the world by his providence, and of the natural law written in our hearts by the Creator; yet there are many obstacles which prevent reason from the effective and fruitful use of this inborn faculty. For the truths that concern the relations between God and man wholly transcend the visible order

[3] This is similar to the way that some scholars argue for the religiosity of New Atheists. For example, see Cale Hubble, "The Sacred Things of Contemporary Anglophone Atheism: Celebrities, Books and Values," *International Journal for the Study of New Religions* 4, no. 1 (2013): 81–112.

> of things, and, if they are translated into human action and influence it, they call for self-surrender and abnegation. The human mind, in its turn, is hampered in the attaining of such truths, not only by the impact of the senses and the imagination, but also by disordered appetites which are the consequences of original sin. So it happens that men in such matters easily persuade themselves that what they would not like to be true is false or at least doubtful.
>
> This is why man stands in need of being enlightened by God's revelation, not only about those things that exceed his understanding, but also "about those religious and moral truths which of themselves are not beyond the grasp of human reason, so that even in the present condition of the human race, they can be known by all men with ease, with firm certainty and with no admixture of error".[4]

Contemporary leaders of the Church have concurred, including Pope John Paul II:

> There are also signs of a resurgence of fideism, which fails to recognize the importance of rational knowledge and philosophical discourse for the understanding of faith, indeed for the very possibility of belief in God.[5]

The current supreme pontiff, Pope Francis, has also endorsed scientific theories, asserting that "The Big Bang, which today we hold to be the origin of the world, does not contradict the intervention of the divine creator" and "Evolution in nature is not inconsistent with the notion of creation".[6] Indeed, the Catholic Church's accommodation of mainstream scientific theories has allowed it to escape certain conflicts that are endemic to several evangelical Protestant groups. Several key figures in the Christian philosophy of religion have hailed from the Roman Catholic tradition, such as Anselm of Canterbury and Thomas Aquinas, whose arguments for God's existence are still influential today. Arguably, even Peter the Apostle, the traditional founder of the Roman Catholic Church, and other very early Christians, like Paul, endorsed certain forms of evidentialism and apologetics:

> But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.[7]

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[4] See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 36–38.

[5] From Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* 55. Contrast these with Protestant reformer Martin Luther's misogynist characterisation of reason as "the Devil's Whore" and his disdain for the great philosopher and scientist Aristotle. See B. A. Gerrish, *Grace and Reason: A Study in the Theology of Luther*, Reprint ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), pp. 1–2.

[6] Adam Withnall. "Pope Francis declares evolution and Big Bang theory are real and God is not 'a magician with a magic wand'," accessed 05/02/2016, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/pope-francis-declares-evolution-and-big-bang-theory-are-right-and-god-isnt-a-magician-with-a-magic-9822514.html.

[7] 1 Peter 3:15–16.

> Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. As a result, many of them believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.[8]

> While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there.[9]

These authoritative figures of early Christianity encouraged believers to discover the truth, via historical and other reasoning, and to share these discoveries. Such Christians may also be influenced by the Lord's declaration, "Come now, and let us reason together".[10] With the arrival of the Enlightenment and the modern age, sociologists like Émile Durkheim and Max Weber expected a continued 'disenchantment' or 'secularisation', wherein religion would decline in power and influence.[11] That this has partially failed to come to fruition has been well documented, particularly with the rise of 'spiritualities' and smaller religions.[12] Many Christians have also held on to their religious beliefs, partly due to the same evidentialism that would be expected to refute such beliefs. While much of the world moved towards rationalism and empiricism, so too did many Christian apologists, particularly of the Protestant tradition. These apologists, who include the likes of Craig, Alvin Plantinga, Richard Swinburne, Dinesh D'Souza, and Ray Comfort among their ranks, often appeal to the same sort of empirical evidence that non-believers appeal to, in order to argue that the God hypothesis is the most plausible one. It is as if evidence itself has become 'sacred' to these celebrity Christian apologists and also, coupled with said celebrity Christian apologists, to their followers.[13]

[8]Acts 11:11–12.

[9]Acts 11:16–17.

[10]Isaiah 1:18.

[11]For example, see Weber (PESC).

[12]See Joshua Landy and Michael T. Saler, eds., *The Re-Enchantment of the World: Secular Magic in a Rational Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009); Cusack (IR); Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). However, Australian census data supplied by the Australian Bureau of Statistics reveals that traditional religion is on the decline, while those of 'no religion' are seemingly increasing, whilst also indicating increasing education as a possible cause. See ABS. "Losing my religion?," accessed 24/07/2016, http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features30Nov+2013.

[13]Research suggests that many Christians indulge in 'celebrity worship', despite the clear prohibition against idolatry in Exodus 34:14. See John Maltby et al., "Thou shalt worship no other gods — unless they are celebrities: the relationship between celebrity worship and religious orientation," *Personality and Individual Differences* 32, no. 7 (2002): 1157–1172.

5.2 Why Evidence?

Before discussing the thoughts of Craig, and those of the attendees to his public events, I wish to speculate on why certain theists and Christians would value evidence so highly. After all, to many adherents, faith is of the utmost importance. Few are better placed than Religious Studies scholars, who have the benefit of being exposed to many more religions than most, to realise that there is much more to religion than belief. There are also elements of ritual, community, kinship, and culture to consider. However, this discipline arguably devotes so much time to observing and describing religions, that the evaluation of the associated religious beliefs is often considered vulgar. For example, Matthew Day asserts that it is the lack of evaluating the claims made by religious adherents that "unites the hopelessly disjointed field of religious studies", and he haughtily declares that "attending to 'the truth of religion' is largely irrelevant for any academic study of religion worth having".[14]

Day invokes an example concerning the British conflicts with the Swazi people in the 1930s, focussing on religious claims made by the latter, which resulted in a victory over the British, declaring that "*It simply doesn't matter if this story is true, false, or an outright lie*".[15] This rather arrogantly assumes that only Day's sort of intellectual pursuits are worthwhile, and ignores the obvious possibilities that numerous people, including historians, psychologists, and philosophers may be keenly interested in the veridicality of these claims. As but one example, another ethnic group suppressed by the British may wish to employ a similar tactic, but wish to know if these claims are true or not, as they are forbidden to lie. Another example would be the investigator into the rationality of miraculous or supernatural claims; clearly something that relates to this very project.

Day's further claim that pondering on the veridicality of the Swazi claims is to "muddy the waters" is absurd and even anti-intellectual. It is as if increasing humanity's *knowledge* – especially regarding the truth – were to be considered a bad thing and not the very point of scholars' existence. Furthermore, such self-serving attitudes can offend believers and non-believers alike. While non-believers might find such considerations to be crucial to their non-belief, believers may also place a great value on their beliefs, and if they are reasonably considered true. It is ludicrous to so sweepingly declare that all religious adherents do not care for rationalism and empiricism, as if their religious practices are wholly disconnected from their thoughts about how the world actually operates. It is as unhelpful as declaring the opposite.

[14]William Arnal, Willi Braun, and Russell T. McCutcheon, eds., *Failure and Nerve in the Academic Study of Religion* (Sheffield, UK: Equinox, 2012), p. 34.

[15]Ibid., pp. 39–41.

Philosopher of religion Kevin Schilbrack agrees, recognising that religious people often do take certain things to be true.[16] In other words, while the academic study of religion should certainly involve more than the veridicality of religious beliefs, the latter cannot be entirely ignored.[17] Donald Wiebe also concurs, completely dismissing the attitude that Religious Studies should only be descriptive.[18] Wiebe sees this as but one problem within the field, which he thinks is rife with 'crypto-theologians', who, even if not particularly religious or dogmatic themselves, seek to defend religion in general, and shield it from proper scientific investigations.[19] Wiebe has his methodological supporters, such as Herbert Berg, who boldly suspects that the unwarranted focus on the tradition of Sufism in Islamic Studies, as the genuine or "nice face of Islam", is politically motivated,[20] and Aaron W. Hughes, who identifies a common thought in – non-confessional – Islamic Studies which says that the forms of Islam "practiced by the Taliban, Saddam Hussein, Wahhabi and neo-Wahhabi groups – are somehow inauthentic precisely because they stray from a pure, divine, and revealed original message".[21]

It should now be clear that while appeals to evidence are not popular with all religious adherents, and with all the scholars researching them, they nevertheless form an important part of many peoples' religious realities, and should thus form an important part of the field of Religious Studies. I now turn to the work of the like-minded philosopher Herman Philipse, who has identified several options for religious believers to describe their beliefs.[22] He first refers to (a) "cognitive interpretations", which has the believer making factual claims – typically concerning their god/s – that are either true or false. Philipse then notes the existence of (b) "non-cognitive interpretations", where religious language is effectively metaphorical, so that "an evaluation in terms of truth or falsity is inappropriate".[23] Among the cognitivists, Philipse notes that there will be (c) those that think that "a religious belief has to be backed up by evidence or reasons in order to be legitimate or reasonable or justified", and (d) those "according to which no supporting reasons are necessarily required for a religious belief to be legitimate or 'warranted'". For the former type of cognitivist, Philipse supposes that (e) some may appeal to methods

[16]Schilbrack (PSR), p. 72. Seemingly a realist, Schilbrack also has responded decisively to attempts to deconstruct the term 'religion', as with the likes of Timothy Fitzgerald and William Cavanaugh. See Kevin Schilbrack, "After We Deconstruct 'Religion,' Then What? A Case for Critical Realism," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 25, no. 1 (2013): 107–112.

[17]Schilbrack (PSR), pp. 76–79. Schilbrack here draws a distinction between "belief in the creedal sense and belief in the taking true sense".

[18]William Arnal, Willi Braun, and Russell T. McCutcheon, eds., *Failure and Nerve in the Academic Study of Religion* (Sheffield, UK: Equinox, 2012), pp. 13–16.

[19]Ibid., pp. 6–27.

[20]Ibid., p. 114.

[21]Ibid., pp. 142–143. See also Aaron W. Hughes, *Islam and the Tyranny of Authenticity: An Inquiry into Disciplinary Apologetics and Self-Deception* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2015).

[22]Philipse (GAS), pp. xiv-xv.

[23]'Non-realist' may also be appropriate.

"quite unlike the methods used by scientists and scholars when they investigate a factual hypothesis of existence", while (f) others will prefer proper scientific and scholarly methods.

Philipse has effectively identified three to four types of belief or categories of religious adherent. The first group in this typology of belief, non-cognitivists, care little for claims made about god/s and are more interested in orthopraxy. This category might include many Pagans, as well as several contemporary modes of religiosity. The second, irrational cognitivists, do place great value on orthodoxy, but are uninterested in justifying why these beliefs should be held. They could be considered to be fideists; that is, their beliefs are based on faith alone, rather than evidence. The exemplar in the academy would arguably be Alvin Plantinga.[24] Another example might be the theologian, priest, and Christian apologist Alister McGrath, who, while harbouring a special disdain for atheists, acknowledges that the evidentialist case for God has failed, and that Aquinas' influential arguments for God's existence are presuppositionalist.[25] It is worth noting that while the fideist is certainly free to believe as they wish, it would be difficult to convince others that their position is true and exclusively so; indeed, many fideists realise this and are uninterested in such endeavours.

The next group, unorthodox rational cognitivists, recognise that their beliefs should be justified, though they use unaccepted methods in their attempts. From the perspective of the final group, these unorthodox rational cognitivists may as well be considered as fideists, since they refuse to use properly scientific methods to justify their beliefs, so that we are effectively left with non-cognitivists, fideists, and finally, 'proper' evidentialists.[26] These orthodox rational cognitivists do recognise the importance of scientific approaches, and try to justify their beliefs about god/s through evidence and reason.[27] This is particularly appropriate if the adherent wishes to convince others of the exclusive truth of her religion. Swinburne and Craig would certainly be considered examples of this position. Of course, if the investigations proved negative, these evidentialists would be expected to de-convert or to retreat into fideism.

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[24]This would seem at odds with his work on the ontological argument, though he has admitted that it is not a proof of God. See Plantinga and Sennett (AT), pp. 65–71. Nevertheless, the difficulty in classifying various believers is revealed by the fact that Craig has reasons for believing apart from his evidential arguments, while Plantinga does indeed think that there are good arguments for God's existence. See Alvin Plantinga, "Two Dozen (or so) Theistic Arguments," in *Alvin Plantinga*, ed. Deane-Peter Baker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 203–228.

[25]Alister McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism: The Rise and Fall of Disbelief in the Modern World* (London: Rider Books, 2004), pp. 179–181.

[26]In other words, those with no beliefs, unjustified beliefs, and justified beliefs.

[27]William Clifford seemed to think that basing one's beliefs on the evidence is not just a good thing to do; it is morally necessary. For more on the famous Clifford-James debate, see Scott F. Aikin, *Evidentialism and the Will to Believe* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014). Interestingly, Aikin raises the issue that without proper evidence, the believer may be led into idolatry (p. 177), which I expand on a little in my review. See Raphael Lataster, review of *Evidentialism and the Will to Believe*, by Scott F. Aikin, *Sophia* 53, no. 4 (2014): 587–588.

For the purposes of this project, the non-cognitivists can be overlooked. They generally do not make factual claims about the world, and simply exercise their freedoms in performing rituals, fostering community, and invoking religious or 'spiritual' language.[28] Since we are interested in evaluating factual claims made about the world, our attention undoubtedly turns to the various types of cognitivist. The irrational cognitivists, like Alvin Plantinga, would obviously offer very little in an objective discussion about 'the truth'. If there are a multitude of possibilities, and there are, then simply claiming one's beliefs as true without any justification will not allow objective observers to conclude that they are correct, while those holding alternative views happen to be incorrect. For example, if the fideist like Plantinga feels warranted in believing in the central tenets of Christianity, on faith and without evidence, it remains unclear as to why they – and others – should not be Muslims instead. Hence, we turn to the rational cognitivists, those that acknowledge that their beliefs about how the world actually is ought to be justified.

Unless we are to suddenly reject widely accepted scientific and scholarly methods for procuring truth, the unorthodox rational cognitivists should also be dismissed. If science is to be valued, scholars ought to seriously consider the arguments of the orthodox rational cognitivists, who make grand claims about how the world operates, and about the evidence that justifies these claims. Craig arguably falls into this category, and thus, his work is worthy of consideration. Yet, while the evidentialist arguments offered by Craig are of the utmost importance, it would be naïve to suppose that it is only his appeal to scientific and historical evidence that convinces his supporters. To Craig, this line of work is not simply the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake:

> Today all of the various traditional arguments for God's existence find prominent, intelligent proponents, who defend these arguments in books published by the finest academic presses, in articles in professional journals of philosophy, and in papers presented at meetings of professional philosophical societies.
>
> Now atheists are hitting back. In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks by Muslim jihadists, secularists have become remarkably aggressive both in the United States and Europe, denouncing religious belief in general with an almost evangelical fervor. Lumping evangelical Christians in with Islamic terrorists, popular writers like Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and Sam Harris have championed atheism in their best-selling books and warned of the dire effects of religious belief upon society. Behind these popular writings stand more substantive critiques of theistic arguments like J. Howard Sobel's *Logic and*

[28]This classification could be used to temper perceptions about religious critics, such as the New Atheists. By making clear that the focus of their criticisms tend to be violent exclusivists rather than non-cognitivists, for example, New Atheists might find it easier to find common cause with more subdued secularists, and also religious liberals. (Note also that even exclusivists would likely oppose – other – exclusivists, since there are a variety of such religious groups.) I touched on this in my interview with Richard Dawkins, finding him to be less 'anti-religious' than is commonly thought. See Raphael Lataster, "A Superscientific Definition of 'Religion' and a Clarification of Richard Dawkins' New Atheism," *Literature & Aesthetics* 24, no. 2 (2014): 109–124.

> *Theism* and Michael Martin's *Companion to Atheism*. We are witnesses to a mighty struggle for the mind and soul of America in our day, and Christians cannot be indifferent to it.[29]

Evangelism does seem to play a role in his focus on the evidence that supports Christian theism. He even indicates, when discussing the ontological argument, that it is not the truth of his arguments – or whether they can be proven true – that really matters, but whether people are convinced that they are true:

> Remember: you don't need to prove a premise to someone in order for the argument to be a good one for him. So long as he believes the premises to be true, he is rationally obliged to accept the conclusion. So we may simply present the argument to the unbeliever as a conditional: if God's existence is even possible, then God exists. That alone is a mind-boggling revelation! We could grant, if we wish, that we can't prove in a non-question-begging way that God's existence is possible, but still rightly insist that if the unbeliever agrees that God's existence is possible, then he's logically committed to the conclusion that God exists. That should give him something to think about!
>
> So I encourage you to master these arguments and learn to communicate them with sensitivity. One of my apologetics teachers once advised, "Know your subject profoundly and share it simply." If you can't answer an unbeliever's objection on some point, admit it and refer him to literature on the subject that can satisfy his question. In an age of increasing atheism and agnosticism, we cannot afford to forgo an apologetic for this most basic of all Christian beliefs: the existence of God.[30]

This approach is multiply problematic. It is easy to see how Craig's placing greater importance on the premises being believed than on being proven true could extend to continual promulgation of these premises, even if they were false and he knew them to be false. However, given the "mighty struggle", it would seem apposite for Craig to make use of all of his talents and resources to get his message across.

5.3 The Celebrity of Craig

Every Christian believer I conversed with at the events of Craig's 2013 tour of Australia, and even some non-believers, expressed their respect and admiration for him. It is easy to point out that a major contributing factor is his accessibility. Rather than limiting his teachings to expensive and technical academic tomes, Craig reaches out through modestly priced and easy to read popular books, and freely accessible blogs and debate videos. Nevertheless, most interlocutors seemed to value Craig's presentations of the evidence for Christian theism, even if, as with Craig, faith is perceived as being pre-eminent. The longest

[29]Craig (RF), pp. 94–95.

[30]Ibid., p. 196. Similarly, see p. 407, where Craig claims that, "More often than not, it is who you *are* rather than what you *say* that will bring an unbeliever to Christ. This, then, is the ultimate apologetic. For the ultimate apologetic is—your life." Craig seems to understand that how one presents is an important factor in influencing people.

discussion was with 'R', who perfectly encapsulates this attitude. On being asked if evidence is at all important to her religious beliefs:

> I would like to answer this with telling you a little about my story. I grew up with Christian parents who taught me the Christian worldview as truth. I decided for myself as a teenager that I wanted to follow Jesus. During this period my evidence for Christianity was my own experience and watching the way God impacted the lives of my parents and people at my church.
>
> At university I started investigating 'the evidence' for God and Jesus and the resurrection. This was through reading a couple of books and a few public talks that my faith was affirmed. It was during this time that I was convinced that the Bible was the Word of God. From then on I decided that I would use the bible to frame my worldview. I guess the evidence laid some foundations for my faith.
>
> Most recently, I would consider the evidence that I have been interested in is the way I see the Bible explaining the world I see around me. It seems to explain things coherently and in a way that meets peoples' needs.[31]

'R' had other reasons, besides what could be called orthodox or objective evidence, for being a Christian. Interestingly, 'R' began to investigate the evidence for those things she already believed. She became interested in the objective evidence for the truth of Christian claims, while moving into tertiary education, and was sufficiently convinced by it that it became an important part of her faith justification. This raises the question about whether her original position is irrevocably altered; perhaps her religion is now so intertwined with her budding evidentialism, that she might de-convert as she learns more about the evidence and which way it leads. On being asked if the lack of evidence would be detrimental to her beliefs:

> Of all the questions I find this the hardest. As for finding some sort of convincing evidence (the example given at the *Life, Universe and Nothing* [event] in Brisbane was if Jesus' body was found and therefore the resurrection could not have happened). It might make me question my faith, to which the resurrection is fundamental, but I am not sure that it would change my mind. Indeed I have not found any evidence [of the resurrection's ahistoricity] that is convincing. It would be hard to change my experience of meeting Jesus and living life under His grace.

While unsure if the lack of historical evidence, or the discovery of contradictory evidence, would shake her from her Christian adherence, she eventually alludes to the importance of another kind of evidence, experiential evidence. This is not unlike the line of thought involved with Craig's 'argument' from experience. Discussing Craig specifically, she claims that "Christian scholars focused on the rational basis for Christianity do affirm my faith to a certain extent." It does seem, to a certain extent, that 'R' wishes to have her cake and eat it too. It seems like the likes of Craig are to be admired, but if they are wrong about their evidence for God, it matters not. This brings to mind my experiences in asking several would-be Christian apologists,

[31] 'R', personal communication, August 23, 2013.

"Would you torture and kill a fellow human if your god commanded it?", only to receive the evasive – and mistaken – reply, "My god is all-good, so would not command such things." Interestingly, 'R' also though it necessary to mention that she is not aware of any convincing evidence against the resurrection's historicity. 'R' also alluded to the fact that the evidence for Christianity is even more important to other Christians she is acquainted with:

> I will note that some people I know are far more interested in apologetics in general or the historicity of Jesus. For some of my friends it has been through the investigation of these things that have led them to follow Jesus. However, it is my view that as human beings we are influenced by many things especially our experiences and the importance each person give to historical evidence and rational arguments is different.

Indeed, while the evidence props up her religious beliefs to some extent, and she notes that the perceived importance of the evidence varies among Christians, 'R' notes that it is because of such evidence that some are initially led to believe. Therefore, to some, considerations of the evidence are crucial; they can mean the difference between adopting the belief or not, and, from an insider's perspective, salvation or damnation. It is here worth noting that the importance of evidence in conversion is not necessarily a new phenomenon amongst adherents of the Judeo-Christian religions. According to the biblical traditions, many came to believe because of witnessing miraculous events for themselves. This is precisely what was discussed in Part 4. The inherently improbable claims found in temporally distant and anonymous documents constitute relatively poor evidence. Relatively good evidence may take the form of direct observations. For an example from the Old Testament, consider the tale of Elijah On Mount Carmel:

> At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: "Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again." Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!" Then Elijah commanded them, "Seize the prophets of Baal. Don't let anyone get away!" They seized them, and Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered there.[32]

That example concerns the Jews. But the New Testament has many such examples of people converting to – what would become – Christianity on account of miraculous happenings being directly witnessed, such as:

> After the two days he left for Galilee. (Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.) When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, for they also had been there. Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death. "Unless you people see signs and wonders," Jesus

[32] 1 Kings 18:36–40.

> told him, "you will never believe." The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies." "Go," Jesus replied, "your son will live." The man took Jesus at his word and departed. While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him." Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and his whole household believed.[33]

The paradox of how the less suspecting peoples of these relatively ignorant times allegedly had the benefit of direct evidence, something that the inherently less suspicious peoples of contemporary times lack, is worth noting. In the previous quotation, Jesus seemed to realise that some will not come to believe without this direct evidence, likely leaving contemporary readers feel hard done by; they are left wondering why they are not graced with these potentially soul-preserving experiences, and instead must make do with claims that are thousands of years old and imperfectly transmitted. If the likes of Elijah and other important Jewish figures can understand the need for empirical evidence regarding conversion, it is inexplicable that this would be considered inappropriate in contemporary times.

Consider also the example of 'Doubting Thomas'. According to the anonymous author/s of the Gospel of John, Jesus did not respond to Thomas' scepticism over his resurrection with anger, mockery, threats, or by declaring that atheists cannot say that rape is wrong. Nay, Jesus granted Thomas with empirical evidence, allowing Thomas to finger his holes.[34] This member of Jesus' exclusive inner circle was given convincing empirical evidence, whilst non-believers, thousands of years later, must seemingly take Craig's word for it that the resurrection was a historical event, and that God was responsible for it. Furthermore, such passages give religious critics ammunition in arguing against such a God's existence, via the argument from hiddenness. It seems relatively improbable that a God that wants to be found would hide so well, from the very people he wishes to save. But it is also worth noting that, according to the Bible, some allegedly did come to believe because of less direct, testimonial, evidence:

> Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did."[35]

Another Christian attendee, 'S', enthusiastically explained to me that "the evidence is very important" and that Craig's efforts in assembling and explaining it are vital. The latter notion accords with research on celebrity culture, which reveals that, "celebrities provide a well-proven route to attracting and retaining audiences".[36] Furthermore, celebrities are sometimes seen as god-like, and there are parallels

[33] John 4:43–53.

[34] John 20:24–29.

[35] For example, see John 4:39.

[36] Philip Drake and Andy Miah, "The Cultural Politics of Celebrity," *Cultural Politics* 6, no. 1 (2010): 49.

between relationships with celebrities and relationships with gods.[37] One of the organisers, 'C', shared S' sentiments. Another attendee, 'S2', a philosophy student, thought that evidence is crucial, but was unconvinced by Craig's case and thus remained agnostic. 'T' agreed with 'S2', but was more content to label himself an 'atheist'. 'Y', a believer and a student of science, was unimpressed by alleged scientific evidence for Christianity's truth, but did ascribe considerable weight to the historical evidence concerning Jesus, further revealing that not all kinds of evidence are viewed equally.

'Y2', a friendly Christian woman who attempted to provide me with direct evidence by healing my minor eczema through prayer,[38] asserted that faith was central, but claimed that Craig's historical arguments concerning Jesus edify her faith.[39] This echoes the situation of 'R', in that the lack of evidence would seemingly not lead to her apostasy. Indeed, the healing was unsuccessful, but this did not count as evidence against the truth Christianity, in the eyes of 'Y2'. She opined, perhaps expectedly, that her lack of faith was to blame. Another host of one of the tour's events, 'M', made it very clear how he and his peers at the Sydney University Evangelical Union value evidentialism. We were both able to agree that claims made about Jesus' resurrection were historical claims, which are either correct or incorrect, and should be supported by evidence. He directed me to the Apostle Paul for support, though the passage in question may actually be counter-productive in that Paul expects Christians to take him at his word:

> But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.[40]

[37]Chris Rojek, "Celebrity and Religion," in *The Celebrity Culture Reader*, ed. P. David Marshall (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 389–417.

[38]While there is a general lack of evidence for the power of prayer in medicine, there is some evidence against it, in the sense that prayer can result in – slightly – less desirable outcomes. For example, see Herbert Benson et al., "Study of the Therapeutic Effects of Intercessory Prayer (STEP) in cardiac bypass patients: A multicenter randomized trial of uncertainty and certainty of receiving intercessory prayer," *American Heart Journal* 151, no. 4 (2006): 934–942. Also, even when I was a Christian, constantly asking God to do his will (see Matthew 6:10 and Luke 22:42), but asking that my faith be strengthened, I wondered about the point of prayer. Why ask a perfect God who will do as he wills anyway, to do his will? Why ask about our needs, which he already knows about, or praise him when he already knows our feelings towards him and should not need the adulation of lesser beings? Cf. David Basinger, "Why Petition an Omnipotent, Omniscient, Wholly Good God?," *Religious Studies* 19, no. 1 (1983): 25–41. Note that despite my humble requests, if God exists, he allowed me to lose faith in him, further bolstering the argument from hiddenness.

[39]Craig does claim that his resurrection argument has resulted in at least one conversion to Christianity. See Craig (RF), p. 400.

[40]1 Corinthians 15:12–17.

I fortuitously met Craig's wife, Jan, who actually sought to draw attention away from his celebrity. After expressing my keen interest in her husband's work, Jan advised me not to be a fan of Craig, declaring that I ought to "be a fan of Jesus" instead. I later told Craig, innocently, about how impressed I was with his wife. After he humorously flashed a suspicious smile and remained uncomfortably silent, I recounted this little anecdote, to which he responded genially, and we resumed our pleasant discussions. Part of Craig's attraction as an evidentialist discussant may be his demeanour and his professionalism. As a professional speaker who has partaken in numerous debates, Craig is very polished. While the pages may lack substance, the cover is very appealing indeed. This was made especially obvious when Craig debated with the physicist, cosmologist, and New Atheist speaker Lawrence Krauss, who was not so refined. Craig speaks very clearly and confidently, even when making grand claims about hypothetical sources and 'facts' concerning the origins of the universe. The latter, and Craig's presuppositions in general, irked Krauss, who became visibly frustrated. This is somewhat understandable, since this presuppositionalist approach encourages academic stagnation via appeals to the supernatural (i.e., "we can stop investigating since God is the answer"), but Krauss would have done well to imitate Craig's calm professionalism.

Krauss appeared to become highly annoyed at times, which was made obvious by his continual gesticulating. By contrast, though he made claims unsupported by evidence, Craig seemed the more respectful, polite, objective, and perhaps trustworthy, figure. Several times, Krauss interrupted Craig, prompting the host to declare that "we're not going to get anywhere if you're constantly talking over Bill."[41] This behaviour continued, with the audience cheering when the host was required to intervene. Krauss even said at one point, "sometimes you make me so mad." This brings to mind the debating technique known colloquially as the 'Gish Gallop', where numerous claims are made, requiring the opponent to expend much time and mental resources in refuting them, or face the inevitable criticism, "you did not address all of my/their points." Craig may not impress

[41]These quotations come from my own observations and notes, but can also generally be sourced from a transcript provided by Craig's online ministry. See William Lane Craig and Lawrence Maxwell Krauss. "Debate Transcript - Life, the Universe, and Nothing (II): Why Is There Something Rather Than Nothing?," accessed 23/12/2015, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/life-the-universe-and-nothing-why-is-there-something-rather-than-nothing.

secular philosophers and scientists with his arguments, though, given his vast experience in debating even since his days in high school and college, he has likely been very thoughtful about how he communicates them to the public.[42] This is very consistent with his realisation that the arguments need not be good; Craig need only *convince* others that they are.

While Krauss continued his poor behaviour, which included fidgeting, restlessness, and a perpetual scowl, Craig was generally still, calm, and respectable, offering only the occasional – possibly feigned – and perfectly-timed confused look. Craig also does well on the fashion front, typically dressing impeccably, wearing dapper suits, ties, and leather shoes, with Krauss preferring his almost dishevelled appearance, right down to the sneakers and multi-coloured polka dot socks. Of course, none of this has any bearing on the soundness of the arguments, though it does impact the public discourse. Marketing studies strongly correlating trust and likeableness make it easy to imagine how such presentation may add to Craig's appeal and polemical effect, and yet I was also able to observe how the power of celebrity can lead to supporters overlooking or minimising their icon's faults.[43] Soon after the debate

[42]"I participated in eight years of high-school and collegiate debate competition. For me, at that time, it wasn't a ministry, it was just a sort of sport. It was an intellectual sport. I was no good at athletics, but I could represent my schools by being on the debating team. We debated matters of public policy—for example, that the military-assistance program of the United States should be significantly curtailed, and so forth. I never dreamt that someday I would be debating as a ministry. But after I had finished my doctoral studies and began teaching graduate school, I started getting invitations from campus ministries in Canada to participate in debates with prominent atheist philosophers on subjects like: 'Does God exist?' or 'Humanism vs. Christianity.' And what I discovered was that whereas a few score might come out and hear me give a lecture, hundreds—even thousands—of students would come out to hear a debate. And so it became very clear to me that debating was really the forum for doing evangelism on the university campus today. And to my delight, I found that my debating days were not over—that, in fact, I got back into debating, but this time as a ministry activity." See TheBestSchools. "William Lane Craig Interview," accessed 05/02/2016, http://www.thebestschools.org/blog/2012/02/01/william-lane-craig-interview.

[43]See Hershey H. Friedman, Michael J. Santeramo, and Anthony Traina, "Correlates Of Trustworthiness For Celebrities," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 6, no. 4 (1978): 291–299. Also, while his research leans towards more mainstream forms of celebrity, Lawrence Grossberg identifies the affective dimensions of popular culture, such as that 'fans' are given a sense of belonging. See Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) and Lawrence Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself: Essays on Popular Culture* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997).

proper I raised the contrasting behaviours of the two debaters with a proudly atheistic attendee, 'M', and their partner, which yielded only dismissiveness. They did, however, display a willingness to move on to the substance of the debate, indicating that they were probably less concerned with rhetoric.

After the formal events, the speakers, especially Craig and Krauss, spent time with numerous attendees. They were subjected to discussions, photographs, requests for book signings, and other signs of reverence by adoring fans. It is easy to see here how things like empirical evidence and scientific rationalism are considered 'sacred' and 'authoritative' by the Christian and atheistic audience members alike,[44] in the sense that these are considered extremely – perhaps ultimately – important.[45] In my many conversations with fellow attendees, I noticed that special status was ascribed to Craig and Krauss, perceived as important figures, icons even, within their respective domains. Indeed such 'celebrities' can be likened to saints; figures to revere and emulate.[46] Unfortunately, this adoration may be particularly unconducive to objective investigations, given that celebrity worship has been linked to decreases in cognitive flexibility, and thus, critical thinking.[47]

To his credit, Craig did appear to be quite approachable and accommodating, even with me. I was able to converse with him several times, which opened the door to further helpful communications later on. He generously allowed me to ask my question about whether the God he believes in is Yahweh,[48] and kindly signed my own copy of his *On Guard*, "to my no. 1 atheist fan", though he hesitated a little as he wondered if that was a lie.[49] While Craig's image is for the most part exemplary, he is not averse to cynically making irrelevant points should the opportunity arise. On the aforementioned incessant interruptions, Craig accused Krauss of 'blurting out stuff' as he thought of it, and likened the scenario to nailing jelly to a wall. Also, by his own admission, Craig is comfortable in employing humour and ridicule:

> Probably the most common response that you'll get to the *kalām* cosmological argument is the retort, "What caused God?" This is usually put with an air of triumph, as though it were a profound and unanswerable question, a stake in the heart of theism. I am just amazed to hear this childish question even on the lips of intelligent professors. In fact, the question is easy to answer. Recently speaking at Oxford University, I was put this question, so I patiently explained that the first premise of the argument is not that "Everything has a cause" but that

[44]It has earlier been implied that scientism and rationalism are the two fundamentals of contemporary atheists. See Christopher Smith and Richard Cimino, "Atheisms Unbound: The Role of the New Media in the Formation of a Secularist Identity," *Secularism and Nonreligion* 1, no. 1 (2012): 27.

[45]See Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Carol Cosman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) and Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957).

[46]Cf. Carole M. Cusack, "Celebrity, the Popular Media, and Scientology: Making Familiar the Unfamiliar," in *Scientology*, ed. James R. Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 390.

[47]Matthew M. Martin et al., "Celebrity Worship and Cognitive Flexibility," *North American Journal of Psychology* 5, no. 1 (2003): 75–80.

[48]See §3.6.

[49]I also cheekily had Krauss sign my copy of Craig's *Reasonable Faith*.

> "Everything that *begins to exist* has a cause," and since God didn't begin to exist, he doesn't require a cause. Indeed, an eternal being *cannot* have an antecedent cause. So God is simply uncaused. Afterwards, Richard Cunningham, the Inter-Varsity Director for the United Kingdom, took me aside and said, "Bill, your answer was fine, but you need to help people see just how dumb the question is by poking a little fun at it." So when I was in Cambridge the next week and was asked the same question, I said, "You know, that's really a meaningless question. It's like wracking your brain wondering, 'What is the cause of the First Uncaused Cause?'" That got a laugh out of the audience and did seem a more effective way of communicating the point. Asking for God's cause is sort of like asking for a bachelor's wife.[50]

This especially seems unnecessarily harsh, given that critics cannot be expected to simply accept that the universe's cause is a god, that happens to be Craig's God, which is defined as being uncaused. He seems overly keen to win debates with derision and by sowing doubt, rather than by utilising appropriate arguments.

Particularly distasteful was Craig's devoting of approximately four minutes of his opening statement to poisoning the well in a debate against reputable academic Hector Avalos.[51] Moments after describing Avalos as "a gentleman and a scholar", Craig explained that he was "very disturbed" by Avalos' alleged "unprofessional conduct" in an earlier debate between Avalos and another scholar. Craig asserted that, "The goal of academic debate is to get at the truth, not to make your opponent come away with egg on his face." He accused Avalos of employing stratagems that were "clearly designed to personally embarrass or humiliate" his opponent. The opprobrium continued, with Craig further accusing Avalos of "grandstanding" and being "in breach of professional etiquette", declaring that he expects Avalos to be professional in their debate. Somewhat paradoxically, given the poor nature of Craig's arguments, Craig alleged that "all this was lost on an untrained audience of impressionable undergraduates". Even more ironically, Craig's noting of Avalos' alleged misconduct was in itself a great misconduct. The focus should be on the arguments, but Craig seems to have other intentions.

Perhaps the most galling example, however, comes from a debate with another vocal atheist, the late journalist and famed New Atheist Christopher Hitchens. Here, while erring, as is his custom, on the definition of atheism, the calm and composed Craig pesters the less philosophically sophisticated[52] – and seemingly anxious, if the

[50]Craig (RF), p. 193.

[51]Hector Avalos and William Lane Craig. "Debate Audio - The Resurrection of Jesus: Fact or Fiction?," accessed 23/12/2015, http://www.reasonablefaith.org/media/craig-vs-avalos-iowa-state-university.

[52]Jaco Gericke, who specialises in philosophy of religion and the Hebrew bible, claims that when it came to a proposed debate between Craig and South African scholars, Gericke – and his proposal concerning Yahweh's existence – was rejected, in favour of Hebrew bible experts (for a debate on the resurrection) with no philosophical background. Gericke also asserts that Craig's camp demanded to know what the proposed arguments of his would-be opponents would be, "without returning the favour" (personal communication, December 23, 2016). Perhaps my own philosophical literacy and familiarity with Craig's case plays some role in his continually refusing to debate with me.

constant fidgeting is an indication[53] – Hitchens into making some concessions that seemingly bolster Craig's efforts:[54]

CRAIG: Alright, let's talk first about whether there are any good arguments to think that atheism is true. Now, it seems to me that you're rather ambivalent here, that you say... You redefine atheism to mean a sort of a-theism or non-theism.

HITCHENS: That's what it means.

CRAIG: But how do you distinguish then the different varieties of non-theism, for example what is normally called atheism, agnosticism, or the view of verificationists that the statement "God exists" is simply meaningless?

HITCHENS: Well, I mean, there are different schools of atheism as you say, but there's no claim I know how to make that says atheism is true, because atheism is the statement that a certain proposition isn't true. So I wish you'd get this bit right because, there you go again. I've just devoted a little time to this. I said it is not in itself a belief or a system, it simply says you can by get by, better probably, we think, without the assumption and that no one who wants you to worship a god has ever been able to come up with a good enough reason to make you to do it.

CRAIG: Now, so the point it though, that on your definition of a-theism or non-theism, it really embodies a diversity of views such as agnosticism, what is normally called atheism, or this verificationism. Now, which of those do you hold to within this umbrella of 'a'-theism? Are you an atheist who asserts the proposition "God does not exist" or do you simply withhold belief in God in the way that the agnostic does?

HITCHENS: Right. On some days I'm a great – no, I'm not going to do you that much of a favor – on some days I'm a great admirer of Thomas Huxley who had the great debate with Bishop Wilberforce in Oxford at the Natural History Museum about Darwinism in the mid-nineteenth century, who was known as Darwin's bulldog – we would now say Darwin's pitbull – and who completely trounced the good bishop. But, I can't thank him for inventing the term 'agnostic' and I can't thank him for some of his social Darwinist positions either, some of which are rather unattractive.

CRAIG: I need an answer to this; my time is fleeting.

HITCHENS: Yes, because I think agnosticism is evasive. To me, yes, if you talk about the power of the Holy Spirit and so forth, to me that is meaningless, it's, to me, I'm sorry, I've tried, it's white noise. It's like saying, "There is only one God and Allah is his messenger." It's gibberish to me.

CRAIG: What is gibberish?

HITCHENS: There are many of us, I'm sorry there are just many of us to whom, of whom this is the case. It may be true, it is true that religion...

CRAIG: Ok Mr. Hitchens, I've gotta press you here because time is...

HITCHENS: Feel free... press away.

CRAIG: What is your view exactly? Do you affirm God does not exist or do you simply withhold belief?

HITCHENS: I think once I have said that I've never seen any persuasive evidence for the existence in something, and I've made real attempts to study the evidence presented and

[53]Hitchens' performance could have been affected by the oesophageal cancer that would soon claim his life.

[54]Devout Catholic Elizabeth Anscombe's debate with famed apologist C. S. Lewis serves as a classic example of how a respected figure can be made to seem foolish by a professional philosopher. See Salwa Khoddam, Mark R. Hall, and Jason Fisher, eds., *C. S. Lewis and the Inklings: Discovering Hidden Truth* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), pp. 177–179ff. It is also possible that Craig simultaneously impresses and confounds audiences by employing jargon, e.g., "moral epistemology".

> the arguments presented, that I will go as far as to say, have the nerve to say, that it does not therefore exist except in the minds of its...
> CRAIG: Alright, so...
> HITCHENS: Except in the Henry Jamesian subject of sense that you say of it being so real to some people in their own minds that it counts as a force in the world.
> CRAIG: Alright, that it's objective. Ok, so you do affirm then that God does not exist. Now, what I want to know and do you have any justification for that?
> HITCHENS: I think I've come unwired [technical issues].
> CRAIG: No, you're still. . .
> HITCHENS: Are you sure?
> CRAIG: Do you have any arguments leading to the conclusion that God does not exist?
> HITCHENS: Well I would rather, I think – I'm wondering if I'm boring anybody now. I would rather say, I'd rather state it in reverse and say I find all the arguments in favor to be fallacious or unconvincing. And I'd have to add, though this isn't my reason for not believing in it, that I would be very depressed if it was true. That's quite a different thing. . .[55]

Hitchens exposed Craig's false dichotomy in rightly asserting that 'a-theism' is equivalent to 'not theism'. Despite this, he seemingly folded under Craig's relentless pressure, effectively conceding that he thinks that God does not exist, handing Craig the initiative and the ability to continually imply that his atheistic opponent needs to prove – or at least show as probable – God's non-existence. Indeed, Craig earlier claimed this outright, towards the end of his opening statement, which preceded Hitchens', asserting that Hitchens must tear down Craig's arguments and must also create his own case for God's non-existence. The latter is actually not necessary in rejecting the case for Craig's theism, and also of relevance is that supernaturalistic alternatives had largely been overlooked. It is worth noting that Hitchens also counter-intuitively admitted that he finds the idea of God distasteful, which also plays right into Craig's hands, particularly when the latter accuses atheists of not being open to God's existence and Christianity's truth.[56] Hitchens would have done better as a non-resistant non-believer, rather than an anti-theist or an anti-religionist. In one fell swoop, Craig has diverted attention away from his unconvincing case, encouraged the audience to see his opponent as confused, closed-minded, and irrational, and offered up a straw person form of 'atheism' that his opponent did not argue for, when indeed, as Hitchens explained, the term simply means 'not theism'.[57]

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[55]Christopher Hitchens and William Lane Craig, *Does God Exist?* (La Mirada, CA: Biola University, 2009), DVD.

[56]Recall Craig's thoughts on the potential need for atheists to 'open their hearts'. See Craig (RF), p. 269. Craig is more explicit on this point towards the end of his opening statement in the Hitchens debate, opining that non-believers need to approach the debate with an 'open heart' and an 'open mind'. This shifts the blame on those who happen just not to believe, often because the evidence is lacking.

[57]Craig elsewhere accuses some atheists of redefining 'atheism', and further attempts to shift the burden of proof, incorrectly asserting that atheists need to argue for God's non-existence. See Craig (OG), pp. 149–151.

Even if Craig were to correctly label an opponent's position as 'mere agnosticism',[58] it certainly does not absolve him of his duties in demonstrating that supernaturalism, theism, and Christianity are probably true. I would add that since such debates are not strictly to discuss supernaturalism vs. naturalism, the resulting discussion about theism vs. naturalism indubitably amounts to a false dichotomy, with alternatives completely side-stepped (likewise for debates on miraculous claims).[59] While this raises questions about Craig's objectivity, this also happens to aid Craig's efforts to present himself as one who has successfully argued for theism's truth, since he tends not to spend much time – if any – arguing against supernaturalistic alternatives such as deism, polytheism, and pantheism.[60] Craig also managed to humorously mock Hitchens and subtly portray atheists as undesirable, to the partisan audience's delight, claiming that he had no preference as to whether a baby born in Saudi Arabia would grow up to be Hitchens or a Wahhabist. It is also worth noting that while Craig enjoys making irrelevant and unnecessary demands on his opponents, he is quick to point out when they do likewise, such as when Hitchens mentioned the genocides allegedly perpetrated by the Ancient Israelites.[61]

Returning to Craig's recent popular book, *On Guard*, its reception provides some insight into Craig's influence. On Amazon.com, *On Guard* is rated at 4.6 out of 5 stars (from 267 reviewers, 76% of which felt the book deserved a perfect 5 out of 5 stars), and has attracted rave reviews from scholars and laypersons alike.[62] There will likely be many more who view Craig's work favourably, and yet have not formally said so. Focusing on those who have, however, fellow apologists and scholars commented:

> In these pages, you'll learn the most compelling arguments in favor of Christianity. Not only that, but you'll also find out how to respond to the most popular objections to those arguments. You'll discover that *On Guard* is solidly factual, winsomely personal, consistently practical, and ultimately convincing in its presentation of the case for Christianity. (Lee Strobel 2010-03-01)

> There is probably no greater defender of the Christian faith alive today than William Lane Craig. *On Guard* is Craig's introduction to the wealth of information, logic, and evidence

[58]He does just this at the start of his first rebuttal, indicating that Hitchens had merely rejected evidence for God and provided no evidence against God's existence, seemingly portraying agnosticism as somehow inadequate.

[59]Recall that Craig feels that he can avoid investigating other miraculous claims because he is so convinced by the Christian miraculous claims, and that he simply assumes that the former are far less significant. See Craig (RF), pp. 277–278.

[60]This, despite both debaters actually mentioning deism, which Craig surprisingly declares as being a "type of theism". In this project, theism and deism are considered to be very different types of supernaturalism. In any case, deism is counter to Craig's view and would make futile his oeuvre.

[61]To Craig's credit, he also did not wish to focus on genocides committed by atheists, even when prompted by the moderator, since it is "irrelevant".

[62]Amazon.com. "On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision: Paperback – March 1, 2010," accessed 18/12/2015, http://www.amazon.com/On-Guard-Defending-Reason-Precision/dp/1434764885.

> that powerfully point to the truth of our Christian beliefs. Read it to deepen your own faith and to embolden your confidence in sharing that faith with others. (Mark Mittelberg 2010-03-01)

> "*On Guard* is an excellent summation of how the Christian faith makes sense of the real world in which we all live. . ." 'Speaking the truth in love,' once again William Lane Craig proves we don't have to be abrasive to be persuasive. (Jim Thomas 2010-03-01)

> William Lane Craig is arguably one of the finest Christian philosophers of our time. His knowledge and skill have placed him on platforms on every continent, engaging the most notable skeptics in dialogue and debate. (Ravi Zacharias 2010-03-01)

> It is hard to overstate the impact that William Lane Craig has had for the cause of Christ. He is simply the finest Christian apologist of the last half century, and his academic work justifies ranking him among the top 1 percent of practicing philosophers in the Western world. Besides that, he is a winsome ambassador for Christ, an exceptional debater, and a man with the heart of an evangelist. I know him well and can say that he lives a life of integrity and lives out what he believes. I do not know of a single thinker who has done more to raise the bar of Christian scholarship in our generation than Craig. He is one of a kind and I thank God for his life and work. (J. P. Moreland 2010-03-01)[63]

This little sample reveals that there are many scholars and fellow evidentialist/Christian celebrities that respect Craig's work, and see it as valuable in winning over prospective converts. Notably, these comments seem to highlight Craig's efforts in convincing others, rather than whether the arguments he presents are sound, which corresponds perfectly with his aims. Customer reviews also reveal Craig's appeal to, and reverence among, laypersons:

> I know it will be among the first books I recommend when a Christian wants to get his feet wet in the defense of the Christian faith.

> Maybe it's just me, but I've found the past few years that anti-theists are getting nastier and more nonsensical. The new atheist's philosophical artlessness (plus its gullibility and imbecility) is more than astonishing; it reflects a deep-seated immorality and irrationality. No one has exposed this little secret more than the outstanding public debater William Lane Craig and in "On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision," he equips the average Christian with potent apologetics. . . This is a resource that is comprehensive enough that the reader need not purchase another evidential book. Craig covers in depth countless subjects that will help train the believer to confidently defend the faith within the bounds of evidentialism.

> I just wanted to start my review by saying that this book quite possibly saved my faith. Right now I'm a senior at Princeton and I've recently been going through the period where I had to stop believing things because that was what I had always been taught and start believing them for my own reasons and an objective appraisal of the truth, no matter where it led me.

> I never knew about apologetics until I stumbled upon one of his videos and eventually this book and when I found out about this man's credibility, I was amazed. Dr. Craig is truly an amazing philosopher, theologian, and defender of the good faith. The short biographies of

[63] Ibid.

> Craig in the book truly proves what he has gone threw to achieve his position. The new age is filled with skepticism and violent refutations, but with all calmness and meekness, we too can propose sound advocacy and rational arguments.

> For a long time, I was the guy that felt I was too weak and unintelligent to defend my faith against atheists, and agnostics in fields of science and history. This book changed that. William Lane Craig presents argument after argument with logical and often empirical validity that seem to be near irrefutable truths. Every Christian should read this book and be able to give a defense of their faith. If you are not a Christian, read this book and put your beliefs to the test.[64]

His inadequate case for theism notwithstanding, Craig has clearly fulfilled his aim. With these fans seeing the value in his work for evangelistic purposes and even for salvaging their own waning faith, the plaudits keep coming:

> I want all that I believe, whether in science, theology, or philosophy, to be consistent with actual objective reality. Many people say this desire is unreachable with any certainty. William Lane Craig shows that belief in the one Christian God is more reasonable than any other belief. I highly recommend this book to anyone who has an open and intellectually honest mind.

> There's a reason why three of the four horsemen of New Atheism (besides the intentionally unreasonable Dawkins) have begrudgingly directed compliments towards Dr. Craig, with the late great Hitchens describing him as extremely formidable, rigorous, and scholarly. There's a reason why on atheist forums, Dr. Craig is the focus of their nastiest attacks, far more than every other apologetic put together. They claim he's a slick car salesman and make excuses for the 95% of atheist luminaries who end up looking completely outclassed when they face him up on the lectern.[65]

The first comment further reveals the extent of Craig's success. Despite making almost no effort to rule out the supernaturalistic alternatives to theism, and composing an irrelevant argument to argue for Christian theism, the commenter is satisfied that Craig has successfully argued for the "Christian God". The latter comment summarises and reinforces the perception that, even amongst atheists, Craig is considered to be a very accomplished apologist, one who argues capably for theism and exposes the shortcomings in the arguments put forth by 'the atheists'. There are several explanations for why so many scholars and laypersons – mostly Christians – are persuaded by Craig, despite his arguments being fallacious and/or insufficient for demonstrating the truth of theism and of Christianity.

One of the most important seems to be the very thing that secular scholars might find so distasteful in his work: his regular appeals to emotion. Reprehensible

[64] Amazon.com. "On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision: Customer Reviews, five star, page 1," accessed 21/12/2015, http://www.amazon.com/On-Guard-Defending-Reason-Precision/product-reviews/1434764885/ref=cm_cr_dp_qt_hist_five?ie=UTF8&filterBy=addFiveStar&showViewpoints=0.

[65] Amazon.com. "On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision: Customer Reviews, five star, page 2," accessed 21/12/2015, http://www.amazon.com/On-Guard-Defending-Reason-Precision/product-reviews/1434764885/ref=cm_cr_pr_paging_btm_next_2?ie=UTF8&filterBy=addFiveStar&showViewpoints=0&filterByStar=addFiveStar&pageNumber=2.

comments about atheists being unable to declare that rape is wrong and that life without God is meaningless may seem unbecoming to the sophisticated philosopher, but is an effective tool in the popular realm.[66] Cool intellection is far less likely to win hearts and minds. Consider the neuroscientific phenomenon of hot cognition; that is, "cognition colored by feeling".[67] When it comes to arguably the most important issues – the ones that provoke deep emotional responses – people are more likely to engage different areas of the brain, and approach the issue with bias and a hampered ability to make quality decisions.[68] By contrast, people can reason better about matters that do not affect them or issues they are apathetic towards.

Matters of life and death are typically not left to the slower working and more rational cognitive structures. People generally do not get married or sacrifice themselves after considering a thorough probabilistic analysis detailing the likely consequences of their actions; rather, they act on instinct and with passion.[69] While seemingly unfair, but also intuitive,[70] people tend not to think as rationally about topics they care very deeply about.[71] It would be difficult to imagine that there could be a topic more emotive than religion, a person's 'ultimate concern', and a key part of their very identity.[72] With the great importance ascribed to certain beliefs by

[66]While Craig made such comments in the debate with Hitchens, they also appear in his written work. See Craig (RF), pp. 72–74, 175.

[67]Alice G. Brand, "Hot Cognition: Emotions and Writing Behavior," *Journal of Advanced Composition* 6, no. 1 (1985/1986): 5. Note that different emotions have differing effects on information processing. See Karl Ask and Pär Anders Granhag, "Hot Cognition in Investigative Judgments: The Differential Influence of Anger and Sadness," *Law and Human Behavior* 31, no. 6 (2007): 537–551.

[68]See Milton Lodge and Charles S. Taber, "The Automaticity of Affect for Political Leaders, Groups, and Issues: An Experimental Test of the Hot Cognition Hypothesis," *Political Psychology* 26, no. 3 (2005): 455–482; Amy L. Krain et al., "Distinct neural mechanisms of risk and ambiguity: A meta-analysis of decision-making," *NeuroImage* 32, no. 1 (2006): 477–484; Stephan C. J. Huijbregts et al., "Hot and Cool Forms of Inhibitory Control and Externalizing Behavior in Children of Mothers who Smoked during Pregnancy: An Exploratory Study," *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* 36, no. 3 (2008): 323–333. For a useful primer on the many problems of human thinking, including discussions on cognitive biases and evolutionary traits, as well as an endorsement of Bayesian analyses, see Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (London: Penguin, 2012).

[69]Alice G. Brand, "Hot Cognition: Emotions and Writing Behavior," *Journal of Advanced Composition* 6, no. 1 (1985/1986): 5–6.

[70]Hot cognition is partly why medical doctors are discouraged from self-diagnosing or treating their loved ones, as per the American Medical Association's recommendations. See AMA. "Opinion 8.19 - Self-Treatment or Treatment of Immediate Family Members," accessed 08/02/2016, http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/physician-resources/medical-ethics/code-medical-ethics/opinion819.page?.

[71]Such imperfection in our thinking, entailing various systems of thought, could also be considered as evidence against God's existence.

[72]It is possible that the ultimate concern of at least some religious people will not be their 'god' or 'religion', but their family, favourite sports team, or even money. Cf. Matthew 6:24 and Luke 16:13. For some discussion on democratically-run Futbol Club Barcelona's being '*més que un club*' ('more than a club'), and even sacred or religious, see Emma Kate Ranachan, "Cheering for Barça: FC Barcelona and the shaping of Catalan identity" (Master's thesis, McGill University, 2008); Jordi Xifra, "Soccer, civil religion, and public relations: Devotional–promotional communication and Barcelona Football Club," *Public Relations Review* 34, no. 2 (2008): 192–198.

believers quite obvious, even prospective converts may be more susceptible to irrational thinking on account of their wishing to avoid an eternity of hellfire; hoping to meet with deceased love ones; being desirous of a blissful afterlife; aiming to address their isolation and loneliness; seeking purpose to their lives; just wanting to make sense of it all. Intentionally or unintentionally, apologists like Craig and other Christian evidentialists are likely reaping the benefits of this phenomenon.

Given that purely rational and objective reasoning will lead to the conclusion that theism is very improbable,[73] even if the existence of some god/s were to be conceded, the manipulation of cognitive faculties achieved by exploiting the emotions of unassuming attendees/readers is precisely what is required by the apologist. This evidence may also suggest that Craig, as someone who holds theism and Christianity so dear, may himself not be able to think very rationally and objectively about the evidence, as opposed to the critic who does not necessarily have an emotional attachment to Christianity's being true or false, and who is aware that there are many more options available. Recall the earlier mention of De Cruz's research, which indicated that those who hold theistic beliefs are more likely to positively judge arguments for God.

Kevin Tobia goes one further with his cleverly designed survey that effectively demonstrates this point.[74] Tobia asked theists, agnostics, and atheists to judge the theistic and atheistic forms of Plantinga-style ontological arguments, which are practically equivalent, as explained in §2.6. He found that agnostics and atheists were more consistent in finding both arguments to be either good or bad, while theists were differential, being significantly more likely to unfairly judge the theistic version as superior to the atheistic version, as if affected by some post-hoc rationalisation. This appears to be a robust study, partly because of Tobia's focus on an empirically-insulated argument, and partly because the found disparate results between the theistic and non-theistic groups still requires an explanation even if we were to speculate about non-theists also being affected by biases; he does wonder if agnostics are irrationally committed to the middle ground.

No matter the position or the strength of the arguments, it does seem that religious beliefs are more likely to bias interpretations. Tobia concludes that philosophy of religion typically endorses theism, that religious beliefs have pernicious effects on argument analysis, and also indicates that the same phenomenon – the inconsistency

[73]There is evidence to suggest that, "analytic thinking is associated with disbelief in God". See Anthony Ian Jack et al., "Why Do You Believe in God? Relationships between Religious Belief, Analytic Thinking, Mentalizing and Moral Concern," *PLOS ONE* 11, no. 3 (2016): doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0149989.

[74]Kevin Patrick Tobia, "Does religious belief infect philosophical analysis?," *Religion, Brain & Behavior* 6, no. 1 (2016): 56–66. Note that as with De Cruz, there is no substantial discussion about the supernaturalistic alternatives to classical theism. Also of use might be Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson, *Mistakes Were Made (but Not by Me): Why We Justify Foolish Beliefs, Bad Decisions, and Hurtful Acts* (New York: Mariner Books, 2015).

among theists – is observed with scholars of other specialisations.[75] The endowment effect and status quo biases may also play a role; people are typically resistant to change and (often over-) value the things they already own and believe.[76] What could be more valuable to a person than their beliefs about their 'ultimate concern'? Additionally, research reveals that people generally prefer to make errors of omission, rather than errors of commission.[77]

Just as with New Testament research, while we should expect similar results when the same evidences and methods are utilised, we find that religious motivations cause discrepancies. While this may seem obvious to non-believers (consider for example the differing interpretations of New Testament scholars from rival Christian sects), recall that Craig effectively and rather proudly admits to the prime importance of his faith and the subservient role of reason and evidence.[78] Borrowing from Crossan's thoughts about the lack of scholarly consensus concerning the Historical Jesus, I opine that this is an academic embarrassment. If our religious motivations cause us to arrive at different conclusions, via the same evidences and methods, we are no longer doing objective research. Again echoing Crossan, we are just 'doing theology'.

In light of earlier allusions that Craig seems to be gathering support for conclusions he has already decided on, and my thoughts on a good god being generally more desirable than an evil god, there is much evidence to suggest that people are

[75]Such bias has long been suspected. For example, see Paul Draper and Ryan Nichols, "Diagnosing Bias in Philosophy of Religion," *The Monist* 96, no. 3 (2013): 420–446. Interestingly, psychologists from Canada discovered that, "Those more receptive to bullshit are less reflective, lower in cognitive ability (i.e., verbal and fluid intelligence, numeracy), are more prone to ontological confusions and conspiratorial ideation, are more likely to hold religious and paranormal beliefs, and are more likely to endorse complementary and alternative medicine." See Gordon Pennycook et al., "On the reception and detection of pseudo-profound bullshit," *Judgment and Decision Making* 10, no. 6 (2015): 559.

[76]William Samuelson and Richard Zeckhauser, "Status quo bias in decision making," *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty* 1, no. 1 (1988): 7–69; Daniel Kahneman, Jack L. Knetsch, and Richard H. Thaler, "Anomalies: The Endowment Effect, Loss Aversion, and Status Quo Bias," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 5, no. 1 (1991): 193–206.

[77]Thomas Gilovich, Victoria Husted Medvec, and Serena Chen, "Commission, Omission, and Dissonance Reduction: Coping with Regret in the "Monty Hall" Problem," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 21, no. 2 (1995): 182–190. For more on these phenomena and the earlier mentioned Monty Hall problem, see Andrea Morone and Annamaria Fiore Fiore, "Monty Hall's Three Doors for Dummies," in *Advances in Decision Making Under Risk and Uncertainty*, ed. Mohammed Abdellaoui and John D. Hey (Berlin: Springer, 2010), pp. 151–162; Kim Kaivanto, Eike B. Kroll, and Michael Zabinski, "Bias-Trigger Manipulation and Task-Form Understanding in Monty Hall," *Economics Bulletin* 34, no. 1 (2014): 89–98. Beyond Monty Hall, such phenomena might help explain the reluctance of believers to accept that their beliefs are not evidentially justified, and may play a role concerning the vociferous rhetoric over Jesus' historicity as well.

[78]Craig (RF), pp. 47–48.

more likely to arrive at conclusions that they are partial towards; the phenomenon of motivated reasoning.[79] Therein may also lie the counter-intuitive – to scholars – conclusion that the much-derided New Atheists, by similarly arguing irrationally via appeals to emotion and the like, may play a useful role in countering such New Theologians and – ironically – promoting rationalism and scientism, and perhaps also religious tolerance. For it is not only important that the truth is disseminated, but that it is presented in a form that is convincing, and accepted as truth – as Craig will agree.

It is now quite clear that evidentialism, particularly exclusivist evidentialism, is a major force within the two-billion-strong Christian world, and that William Lane Craig's work and persona are playing an important role.[80] He not only assists in spreading the Word with his popular books, but also through debates that are widely available on the Internet; outlets where his use of 'common sense' and intuition,[81] and his demeanour, have the potential to sway less sophisticated audiences.[82]

5.4 Conclusions

While not always highly valued by all, evidentialism is undoubtedly a non-negotiable element of many aspects of contemporary living.[83] The desire to know what is true, about health, about the environment, about god/s, and so forth, has led to much advancement, and inevitably, to religious scepticism. Nevertheless, many religious adherents, including theists and Christians, also value the role of reason and evidence, even when it pertains to the fundamental tenets of their religious beliefs. Rather than finding evidence to be a nuisance, many Christians find that it reinforces their religious faith, and believe that it can be invoked in apologetics and evangelism. The role of evidence in disseminating Christian beliefs seems to have been present very early on in the faith's history, as demonstrated by Christian scriptures and Church traditions. This continues into contemporary times, with many scholarly and lay Christians pointing to scientific and historical evidence to bolster the truth of Christian beliefs.

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[79] See Ziva Kunda, "The Case for Motivated Reasoning," *Psychological Bulletin* 108, no. 3 (1990): 480–498. Recall also the earlier comments on contextual priming in §2.7.

[80] Many of these comments contradict the view that religious arguments do not persuade. For an example of this view, see Jennifer Faust, "Can religious arguments *persuade*?," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 63, no. 1 (2008): 71–86.

[81] That is, presumptions based on ultimately limited understandings. One factor in these limitations might be our evolutionary history. For example, humans did not evolve to solve the big questions, but to survive and reproduce. Quantum mechanics serves as an apt example about how common-sensical intuitions can become useless, at the sub-atomic level.

[82] 'Fans' may adopt the perceived values and behaviours of celebrities. See Ellis Cashmore, *Celebrity Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 83.

[83] Perhaps this statement can be softened a little, in light of the 2016 US presidential primaries.

Of course, not all religious adherents place such great value on evidence concerning their religious practices and/or beliefs. But many do. When considering the various types of religious adherent, I concluded that if the religious believer wishes to uphold and promote religious exclusivism, they ought to be among the ranks of the evidentialists, largely because agnosticism ought to lead to at least a soft form of religious pluralism.[84] William Lane Craig is presumably one such figure. While still asserting the importance of faith, he recognises the crucial role evidence plays in Christian apologetics and evangelism. Numerous informal discussions with attendees at Craigian events – and also more indirect observations – confirmed that many Christians find the appeal to evidence, and Craig's work in particular, to be very important for retaining their beliefs about Christianity, and for sharing their beliefs with others.

Craig seems to do well in his role, which straddles the scholarly and non-scholarly realms, portraying a confident, assertive, thoughtful, respectful, and sophisticated figure, particularly when contrasted with atheistic debate opponents – particularly New Atheists – who might come off as uncouth and largely ignorant of the most pressing philosophical concerns. Public image aside, Craig is not averse to utilising the dark side of rhetoric, with his hand-waving and numerous logical fallacies, such as straw person arguments, ad hominem arguments, shifting the burden of proof, and arguing from ignorance. Through his appeals to emotion, Craig also likely manipulates his audiences via the phenomena of hot cognition and motivated reasoning. This, and his presuppositionalism, makes his work all the more dangerous to genuine evidentialism; to truly honest and objective discussions about the evidence and what it most probably entails regarding beliefs about religion and the supernatural. This is amplified by his promotion of an exclusivist mindset, which so easily extends to bigotry, violence, and far-reaching political decisions. Hence, scholarly and popular critiques of Craig's work are all the more necessary, and could lead to more irenic approaches to religion.

[84]This is particularly the case if the religion seeks to curtail the rights of others, and also of members.

Conclusions

William Lane Craig is a prolific Christian scholar and debater. While many philosophers casually dismiss his arguments, particularly when the likes of Richard Swinburne are perceived as more worthy of refutation, I find his case to be of great importance on account of Craig's appeal to the populace. It is understandable that laypeople would be ignorant of the work of Swinburne and also sophisticated non-theistic scholars, while Craig, with his simplistic arguments and unflinching presence in the public realm, is more likely to garner attention, and thus, have real impact in these intellectual, and possibly spiritual, battles for minds, and souls. This book sought to examine Craig's case for Christian theism, and, finding it wanting, to describe how Craig is perceived, and to ultimately explain why he is relatively successful despite his case's lack of substance.

After some preliminary discussion about the recent attention accorded to natural theology and probabilistic reasoning, several aims were clarified.

Supernaturalism

The primary aim of this research project was to produce a generalised critique of William Lane Craig's cumulative case of arguments for supernaturalism, for theism, and more specifically, for Christian theism. After describing the sort of theistic god that Craig believes in, Part 2 discussed the arguments for theism usually presented by Craig in his books and debate recordings intended for public consumption. One by one, each of Craig's arguments was deemed inadequate, due mostly to controversial premises, but also to errors of logic; the reliance on intuition was also unseemly. For example, his take on Leibniz's cosmological argument from contingency merely asserted that which it was supposed to prove: that the universe is contingent, and is explained by the existence of a necessary god. Craig's famed version of the *kalām* cosmological argument relied on the unproven notion of the universe's absolute beginning, from nothing, and also on the currently unpopular A-Theory of time. The

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latter Craig has earlier argued for, on the basis of common intuition and his theologically motivated preferences, making his process appear entirely circular. Craig also implied, without good reason, that God could be eternal or timeless, but that the universe or whatever else might underlie it could not be.

Craig's teleological argument from fine-tuning resulted in his overlooking the necessity and chance explanations, due to a lack of direct evidence, in favour of his more inherently implausible design explanation that was itself presented without direct evidence. Craig's axiological argument also failed since it simply presumed that there are objective moral values and duties, and further presumed a causal relationship between these and God's existence. I explained how his evidence for the existence of an objective standard of morality stemmed from the assumption of God's existence, so that Craig once again assumed that which he was supposed to prove, in an explicitly circular fashion. Perhaps upon realising that none of his arguments necessitate a being as lofty as the maximally-great God, Craig invoked Plantinga's ontological argument, despite the fact that even Plantinga admitted its critical flaw: that it falsely equivocates between epistemic possibility and metaphysical possibility. In other words, this argument essentially assumed that which it was supposed to prove, confirming a common trend in Craig's increasingly problematic and circular case for theism. Finally, Craig's appeal to divine experience is subject to the problem of metaphysical excess, and was found to be utterly devoid of any sort of proper reasoning, with Craig even admitting that it "isn't really an argument for God's existence".

It was also noted that Craig is guilty of cherry picking the evidence. Related – though often unstated – evidence (such as 'bad design', the unnecessary vastness of the universe, great unawareness of the supernatural, and the facts that all observed minds are embodied, all observed beings occupy space, and all observed 'beginnings' have material causes) could be used in arguments against God's existence, and this even applies to the evidence Craig did appeal to, so that this evidence is not obviously evidence of theism. Those familiar with Bayesian reasoning will also recognise that whenever a low prior probability was here claimed, as with miracles, the underlying evidence or reason is often easily translated into a probabilistic argument against supernaturalism or theism, often in the *modus tollens* form.[1] The same could be said for the consequent probabilities. Therefore, just as for the case overall, Craig's evidential arguments required transparent probabilistic analyses, that account for all of the available evidence, and all of the alternatives, which he did not provide. Even if we wish to grant that he argued in a relative sense here, to show that the hypothesis of theism trumps the 'hypothesis of naturalism', that is not sufficient due to the many naturalistic hypotheses in play, and the impact of prior probabilities. Finally, my critiques of Craig's arguments presaged greater problems.

[1]For example: (1) If God exists, God would perform many miracles. (2) Miracles do not occur. (3) Therefore, God does not exist. Another: (1) If God exists, God is an unembodied mind. (2) Unembodied minds do not exist. (3) Therefore, God does not exist.

Theism

Part 3 began with a quick description of the many technical problems of Craig's probabilistic case, finding that even if the arguments were mostly – or even wholly – accepted, theism, or even the broader supernaturalism, had not been demonstrated as being probable. In fact, while I eagerly utilised the probabilistic reasoning Craig – at least facilely – endorses to reveal theism's improbability, the usefulness of probabilistic arguments was effectively questioned.[2] Rather, we should just take a piece of evidence and ask if this makes theism or a-theism more likely. Continue with the remaining pieces of evidence, factor in any scrutable prior probabilities, and an objective and transparent figure is the result, with no such 'arguments' being necessary.[3] Whether he employs arguments or not, Craig needs to properly weigh up the evidence for and the evidence against (which he admits exists), in light of the many alternative hypotheses.

My own comparative analysis demonstrating naturalism's superiority followed, with some discussion about atheological arguments, particularly the arguments from evil and hiddenness. The latter in particular is very powerful, arguably transcending all others to become something like a meta-argument. The very fact that Craig feels the need to argue for God's existence is itself evidence against God's existence; it is evidence of the hiddenness of a being that is not supposed to be hiding, but that should be doing everything in its – unlimited – power to ensure that as many people as possible believe in and worship him. Recall that there are many more atheological arguments found throughout, surpassing the number of theological arguments Craig presents, though not always couched in the form of 'an argument', and instead expressed as a relatively low prior probability or consequent probability. Then, in accordance with one of the more ambitious aims of this project, I unleashed my *coup de grâce*. Not content with merely thwarting Craig's arguments for theism and then arguing for naturalism, I exposed the magnitude of the theistic case's failings, by temporarily putting naturalism to one side and demonstrating how the evidence underlying Craig's arguments was actually more likely on alternative supernaturalisms, many of which also benefitted from superior prior probabilities. In other words, Craig's arguments led anywhere but to theism. They led to, if not naturalism, non-natural non-theisms.

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[2]Hark back to the introductory comments about the definition of a good argument, and the need to agree on premises. The same applies to methods, if a fruitful discussion is to occur. So my use of probabilistic reasoning is not simply to use the theist's methods against them, but – among other reasons – to foster a constructive discourse. For those wishing to forego probabilistic reasoning, purely *a priori* arguments are also subject to many of my main criticisms, primarily those concerning supernaturalistic alternatives to theism and alternative revealed traditions. We can accept such arguments and still wonder why we should agree with the Christian theist, rather than, say, the Enlightenment-era deist, the Islamic pantheist, the Hindu panentheist, the Zoroastrian polytheist, or even the Jewish naturalist. Why not simply accept the panoply of properly basic Jain beliefs, or the reformed epistemology of the Sikhs, or certain Daoists' claims about the *sensus divinitatus*?

[3]However, arguments have polemical and rhetorical effect, which is what Craig seeks to take advantage of, as he effectively admitted. Recall Craig (RF), pp. 196, 407.

Momentarily assuming the transcendence of the divine, the catch-all hypothesis of polytheism proved to be an immovable obstacle, on account of its infinitely many variants, and unknown prior probabilities for all the hypotheses. Craig, and also Swinburne, could only invoke the notion of simplicity, which proved to be a *non sequitur* as simplicity has not been demonstrated as being truth-conducive; and even then, this alleged effect ought to be quantified. Alternative monotheisms provided yet more significant challenges to Craig's theism. There are infinitely many non-maximally great or sub-maximal monotheistic gods that could exist, with Craig again unsuccessfully appealing to simplicity. Even with simplicity charitably accepted as being truth-conducive so that these options, and the polytheisms, were defeated, it was unclear how the historically important deistic subset would be overcome.

In fact, the hypotheses entailing non-revelatory gods were found to be more probable than the theistic hypothesis, on account of the evidence of divine hiddenness. They may also be simpler. Even with this overlooked, however, the appeal to simplicity proved to be a double-edged sword. Craig's brand of simplicity renders the naturalistic and pantheistic hypotheses more probable. With the assumed notion of divine transcendence then discarded, pantheisms, panentheisms, and pandeisms were argued as being simpler and less ad hoc than theism, which Craig does not even attempt to disprove. I argued that the ontological argument actually supports a pantheistic view, and demonstrated that a broad-minded pandeism, much like naturalism, was evidentially – and thus probabilistically – superior to theism in almost every way imaginable.

Craig is not the only philosopher of religion to privilege theism so, as if supernaturalistic alternatives did not equally or better explain the evidence. Like Craig, Richard Swinburne, the exemplar of the field, so hastily overlooks these alternatives due to theism's assumed simplicity. However, they have not demonstrated that their brand of simplicity is conducive to truth, and nor has any scholar, in any academic discipline. Randal Rauser, agreeing to debate with me on his evidence for Christian theism found my appeal to these alternatives "a little bit ridiculous", and decided that he would rather compare only "two views, theism and atheism".[4] Many more Philosophers of Religion seem to effectively accept the theism-naturalism false dichotomy, as evidence by the recent *Philosophy and the Christian Worldview*.[5] This is likely because most Philosophers of Religion happen to be theists. Aiding

[4]For access to a recording of the debate, and my summary, see Raphael Lataster. "Randal Rauser vs. Raphael Lataster – The Proof for Theism and Christian Exclusivism (2015)," accessed 03/03/2016, http://www.raphaellataster.com/debates/rauser-vs-lataster.html. Similarly, Catholic apologist Trent Horn scoffed at my attempt to 'argue over which god exists', as if it were not directly relevant to the debate over the theistic hypothesis' truth. See the recording and review at Raphael Lataster. "Trent Horn vs. Raphael Lataster – Does God Exist? (2016)," accessed 12/12/2016, http://www.raphaellataster.com/debates/horn-vs-lataster.html.

[5]For my review of this edited book, see Raphael Lataster, review of *Philosophy and the Christian Worldview: Analysis, Assessment and Development*, by David Werther, Mark D. Linville, editors, *Literature & Aesthetics* 25, no. 1 (2015): 162–164.

this phenomenon, most of the non-theists are seemingly devoted to refuting the claims of the *theists*, and are – either soft or hard – naturalists themselves. Nevertheless, Schilbrack is one philosopher who agrees that Philosophy of Religion as it is now may as well be labelled "philosophy of theism", and wisely recognises that alternative god models such as pantheism should be contemplated.[6] Thankfully, the likes of Herman Philipse and Stephen Law have supported – and joined – me in my efforts to bring attention to these supernaturalistic alternatives. It is my hope that many more will do so in the near future.

Interestingly, though the likes of Craig and Rauser mean something else by the term, through my effective argument from supernatural alternatives I have ended up comprehensively arguing for 'atheism'. Insofar as 'atheism' is semantically equal to 'non-theism',[7] my arguing for the relative superiority of certain naturalisms and alternative supernaturalisms amounts to my arguing for the catch-all hypothesis of a-theism. Two views, indeed, and atheism is to be preferred over theism.

Nevertheless, in order to highlight further challenges to Craig's case, the truth of theism was momentarily accepted. Also of import is how and when God revealed herself to humankind. Many possibilities were considered, such as that God's special revelation was reserved for an extra-terrestrial species, alternative terrestrial species, inanimate objects, and earlier forms of humans. Furthermore, it was considered that the revelation had not actually occurred as yet. Even with the possibilities charitably limited to the Judeo-Christian traditions, and eventually to only the Christian traditions, uncertainties still remained, such as whether God was to be identified as Yahweh, Baal, Lucifer, the Demiurge, and so forth. Not only are there many options here for the theist, but Yahweh, the god of Craig and most other Jews and Christians, looks markedly different to the God of theistic philosophy. Further potential hurdles were outlined, such as genuine concerns over which texts are canonical, the reliability of the relevant texts, and the interpretations thereof.

Christian Theism

Attention finally turned to Craig's all-important Christological argument in Part 4, with similar arguments by his fellow Christian scholars examined also (and found unhelpful). With his first premise concerning certain undisputed facts, such as that Jesus' tomb was found empty, I noted how many scholars dispute them, and exposed the fallacious methods used in unearthing these facts. The unreliability of the sources – which bizarrely included sources that are not extant, i.e., hypothetical

[6] Schilbrack (PSR), pp. 11–14. Schilbrack's ideas have received significant support. For example, see Andrew B. Irvine, "On Kevin Schilbrack's *Philosophy and the Study of Religions: A Manifesto*," *Sophia* 53, no. 3 (2014): 367–372. Recall also the earlier comments about Mulgan's beliefs.

[7] There is hardly a question, etymologically. I do concede that many words do evolve beyond their original meanings, though many – perhaps most – atheists today are actually more agnostic than strongly naturalistic.

sources – was then explained, which resulted in questions over whether even a more mundane 'Historical Jesus' had existed. Despite the protestations of many biblical scholars, the non-existence of Jesus was deemed a reasonable notion, particularly due to Paul's apparent ignorance over the 'Gospel Jesus', and his belief in a Celestial Messiah; the latter being a character that many pre-Christian Jews had already believed in.

Content to charitably accept Jesus' historicity, I then effectively constructed an argument against miracles, obliterating the charge that atheists need to assume that miracles are impossible. This was achieved by appealing to historical frequencies and contemporary observations on natural laws, so that miraculous claims could be analysed probabilistically. In this way, Christians can reasonably refute the miraculous claims of competing traditions, but must also accept the damning implications concerning their own. Finding Craig's hypothesis that Jesus was raised from death to be extremely improbable even given supernaturalism, I also noted other problems, such as that there is no necessary causal relationship with the God of theism, and the fact that the resurrection does not entail Christian exclusivism.

Given the lack of compelling empirical, philosophical, and historical proofs for Craig's Christian theism, and given that there are ample reasons to suppose that alternatives better explain the data, the existence of the Craigian God should be provisionally rejected.

However, if despite my best efforts I have failed to demonstrate that alternatives to Christian theism are more probable, or I simply should display more doxastic humility on account of epistemological uncertainty and the problem of induction, I can acquiesce; after all, though I consider my approach to be quite objective, I too could be subject to the blind-spot cognitive bias, and it is plausible that such things are beyond our ken. Or, if global scepticism is too much, and we inexplicably concede supernaturalism, perhaps we should acknowledge a local scepticism about the latter, so that we cannot say that theism is particularly improbable relative to supernaturalistic alternatives. It is then still the case that Craig needs to probabilistically elevate his Christian theism above these alternatives. If Craig continues in his refusal to do so, or fails to do so convincingly, then he has not argued that the Christian God probably exists, nor that his form of religion is exclusively 'true'. He only appeals to possibility. In that case, there are many possibilities, infinitely many, in fact, and we are left with complete agnosticism. Revealing a pivotal asymmetry, while many atheists – myself included – would be comfortable with such agnosticism (and perhaps also apatheism), would effectively go on to lead their lives as de facto naturalists, and would typically be tolerant of others' *Weltanschauungen*, it is the evidentialist exclusivist theist who would find such agnosticism disagreeable, and discordant with their views.

But regarding epistemic probabilities, such agnosticism, via the principle of indifference, necessitates that 'theism'[8] ought to be considered extremely improbable simply

[8]Or specifically, 'Craig's brand of Christian theism'. All other 'brands' of theism are effectively alternative monotheisms.

because all else, 'not theism', *or 'a-theism'*, takes up so much more of the probability pie. As per the calculations in §3.3, the probability of the truth of theism is 0%, rounded to a billion and more decimal places, and the probability of the truth of atheism is 100%, rounded to a billion and more decimal places. This effectively means that God's existence has been disproved; in an epistemic probabilistic fashion, as is appropriate with most other scientific hypotheses, even if we ignore the considerable evidence that is more expected on alternatives to theism. So, perhaps perversely, even if I am wrong, I am right. God does not exist. Disbelief in God is very much warranted. In this actual – as opposed to Craig's false – dichotomy, 'atheism'[9] is vastly more probable than theism, or at least Craig's preferred type of theism. But even if I am wrong about *that*, and we should consider theism and atheism to be locked in a proper stalemate, it is still the case that theists either need to decisively elevate theism probabilistically or accept that the agnostic's position is as, if not more, reasonable.

One final note on Craig's brand of reasoning: throughout his inchoate case, Craig does not properly argue for what is probable; he merely describes what is possible – something he criticises his opponents for doing, though they are more justified in doing so – and assumes his hypotheses to be probable, or even certain. He would have done well to heed this teaching on epistemic humility, from what would now be perceived as one of Jesus' religious rivals: "To recognise you know when you know, and to recognise you do not know when you do not know, that is knowledge."[10]

Public Interactions

In sum, Craig failed to prove that there does exist something beyond the natural world (overcoming naturalism); failed to prove – or even seriously attempt to prove – that that something is the God of theism (overcoming the infinitely many and often more plausible alternative supernaturalisms); failed to prove that this God has revealed itself to humankind, through the Judeo-Christian tradition (partly overcoming alternative theistic religions); and failed to prove that his preferred form of religion is exclusively true (decisively overcoming alternative theistic religions). There may be more that Craig needs to do to convince non-resistant non-believers, but these challenges are already very burdensome and likely insurmountable. Nevertheless, how Craig interacts with his audiences may also play a role in the discourse and perceptions about religion and rationality.

With his case for Christian theism handily defeated, Part 5 focussed on various sociological aspects concerning Craig's ministry. Direct observations in the field, and also indirect observations via online research, revealed that many Christians are evidentialists, and highly value Craig's case despite the unconvincing nature of his arguments. The latter was argued as being partly due to recent revelations from the

[9]Or specifically, 'all hypotheses sans Craig's brand of theism or Christian theism'.

[10]From the *Analects* of Confucius 2.17.

cognitive sciences; namely, that many people have difficulty in thinking rationally about matters that are very important to them. Craig's allure was also recognised, and yet, he is content to commit numerous – and sometimes distasteful – errors of logic, such as shifting the burden of proof and appealing to emotion. With this, it was decided that the dreaded New Atheists appeared not much worse than New Theologians like Craig, whilst they at least serve some useful purpose in promoting proper logical reasoning and the scientific method. Given the paradox of Craig's unconvincing and rudimentary case for Christian theism and his success with lay – and sometimes scholarly – audiences, it is concluded that a thorough and ongoing critique of his arguments and methods, including his melange of logic and theological presupposition, as well as the dissemination thereof, is very much necessary.

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